

C H A P T E R O N E

Historic Landscaping

Victorian Landscaping Practices, 1860-1900

Because the Gates/Wallace/Truman house was built and enlarged during the Victorian era, roughly 1860 to 1900, its landscape reflects many of the elements in vogue during that time. The following narrative relates Victorian landscaping practices, many of which the Harry S Truman National Historic Site at 219 North Delaware Street exhibited during this period.

The most popular conception of Victorian landscaping is the elaborate, ostentatious flower gardens and imposing iron urns which graced the landscape. Of course, because of the tremendous expense involved, these extensive gardens were only exhibited by wealthy citizens, while the common man copied some of these elements on a much smaller and modest scale.

Two important features of Victorian period homes were a fine lawn and large trees. Prior to the mid-1860s, American homes sported shaggy lawns which were cut with scythes four or five times a year and then raked. With the invention and availability of close-cutting lawn mowers, the "close-cut garden lawn" came into vogue.¹ Lots were covered with grass, interrupted only by walkways, a driveway for carriages, and gardens. Tall, stately trees were favored to complement a home's architecture. In order to maintain scale and spatial relationships, large homes of the Queen Anne style (such as the Gates/Wallace/Truman home) featured the American elm or the rapid-growing maple. In rural areas where homes were not as close together as in the inner-city, trees lined the front and/or side yards. Trees were planted to shade homes from the summer sun, but were not found near garden areas where plentiful sunshine was important. Trees in Victorian landscapes appeared alone or in groups and were generally not all planted at the same time. A common practice was to plant a tree to commemorate a birth or other special personal or national event.

In order not to detract from architectural style, plantings around a home's foundation were not a common practice until the turn of the century. Exceptions to this rule involved fragrant,

¹ Dan Maciejak, "Back to Meadows," The Old-House Journal (March 1981), Vol. IX, No. 3, p. 59.

flowering bushes which were planted near windows for the benefit of the residents. Shrubbery was often found away from the house clustered around trees. A primary function of shrubbery was for screening, to control the view between the home and the street. Shrubbery also served to delineate boundaries or sections within the lawn. Because croquet was a popular lawn sport, shrubbery often defined these playing fields.

Generally, Victorian properties were fenced, especially the vegetable garden(s) in order to keep farm animals out. Because wood was plentiful, it was an inexpensive and common fence-building material. For the more affluent, decorative cast-iron fences were also common. Sundials were prevalent structural elements commonly found inside garden areas or other open lawn areas where sunshine dominated. To make the sundial more accessible to passersby, it was frequently placed along or near walkways.² Sundials were popular in conjunction with rose gardens or as the focal point where paths came together.³

Early Twentieth Century Landscaping Practices, 1900-1930

The most obvious landscaping difference between the early twentieth century and the height of the Victorian period involved the extensive use of shrubs to conceal the home's foundation, literally giving the appearance that the structure was tied to the ground. The practice of foundation plantings began toward the end of the Victorian period as a means "to soften and give character to architecture."⁴

Simultaneous with these trends was the "Arts and Crafts" movement which emphasized "natural simplicity," an effort to reunite people with nature. Dense foundation shrubbery evolved as the century wore on. Initially, flowers and small groundcover graced these areas. Pergolas, inspired by Italian influences,

² Rudy J. Favretti and Joy Putnam Favretti, Landscapes and Gardens for Historic Buildings: A Handbook for Reproducing and Creating Authentic Landscape Settings (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1978), pp. 46, 50, 62-3; and Donna Jeanloz, "Victorian Landscaping," The Old-House Journal (April 1977), Vol. V, No. 4, pp. 44-5, 47.

³ Donald Wyman, "Garden Fixtures: Sundials," Wyman's Gardening Encyclopedia, revised and expanded edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1977), p. 431. Instructions for installing and setting a sundial can also be found on this page.

⁴ Donna Jeanloz, "Victorian Landscaping," The Old-House Journal (April 1977), Vol. V, No. 4, p. 44.

proliferated and served to integrate homes with the outdoors. Arts and Crafts gardening practices emphasized openness while consigning plantings to the foundation and boundary areas. Along with pergolas, common architectural garden elements included sundials, birdbaths, and flagstone paths.

White, open latticework fences were popular in the post-Victorian era as a decorative backdrop for plantings. Trellises were a common feature in garden areas or as screening. The Arts and Crafts movement advocated rose gardens for every homeowner. These rose gardens were usually centered around sundials.

The Arts and Crafts concept of "natural simplicity" emphasized gardens composed of local and exotic wildflowers. In reaction to the Victorian practice of a solid carpeting of flowers in intricate patterns, the English countryside practice of using perennial flowers to border gardens became common. These simple flower arrangements were often long beds with flowers freely intermingled. It was common to place spring bulbs such as daffodils into the very fabric of the lawn in informal beds.⁵

Another element of the early twentieth century American landscape involved "drying yards" for the clothesline. Clothespoles were placed either in the garden, obscured behind the house, or adjacent to the carriage house.⁶

The most important area which served as a transition between the house and the landscape was the porch. According to one source, "porches were indeterminate social zones":

... places where the family members could recognize or ignore passers-by as they chose; places where the children could freely entertain without committing the family to reciprocity; places where casual acquaintances could be entertained without committing the full resources and recognition of the house.

Porches gave our ancestors the opportunity to get close to family and friends during long summer evenings. After supper, the family would take up customary positions on the porch and talk among themselves through "shadow time" and well into the

⁵ Scott G. Kunst, "Post-Victorian Houses: Landscape and Gardens," The Old-House Journal (April 1986), Vol. XIV, No. 3, pp. 128-134.

⁶ Favretti and Favretti, Landscape and Gardens for Historic Buildings, p. 71.

darkness of night (lamps or candles would have attracted bugs).

And of course, perhaps the most famous social use of the porch was as a trysting place for young lovers: far enough away from the house to provide some intimacy, but close enough to it to be a refuge from too much intimacy.

In the country, the porch allowed the dweller a sheltered area in which to enjoy "prospects" or views. In more urbanized areas, the porch fronting on the street provided a connection to the neighborhood. People sitting on the front porch "watching the world go by" declared that they were part of the community and were willing to enter into social intercourse with passing friends and neighbors.⁷

⁷ John Crosby Freeman and Clem Labine, "In Praise of Porches," The Old-House Journal (August 1981), Vol. IX, No. 8, p. 185.

C H A P T E R T W O

Early Years at 219 North Delaware Street, 1867-1918

There have been numerous owners of the property at the southeast corner of North Delaware Street and Blue Avenue (now called "Truman Road") in Independence, Missouri, since it was first platted in 1831. Historical evidence of the physical property which became known as 219 North Delaware Street is extant only following the Civil War. George Porterfield Gates purchased Lots 2 and 3 of James F. Moore's Addition on June 21, 1867.¹ The following year, Gates bought Lots 1 and 12 to expand his holdings in the area. Lot 1 lies directly east of Lots 2 and 3, while Lot 12 is to the immediate south of Lot 1. The north half of Lot 1 became the family garden, while the south half and all of Lot 12 was a pasture. The four lots form a giant "L."²

Family tradition holds that George P. Gates had the original house constructed in 1867. A bird's eye view lithograph of the city of Independence in 1868 shows a two-story house on the property with a small one-story addition on the back. The lithograph depicts five trees paralleling Blue Avenue (later called Van Horn Road and then Truman Road) in the Gates' north side yard.³ No plantings appeared adjacent to the house or in the front yard.³

George P. and Elizabeth Gates raised five children in the house at 11 Delaware Street, the home's first address designation until it was changed to the familiar 219 North Delaware Street in the 1890s.⁴ On June 13, 1883, daughter Margaret Elizabeth (Madge) Gates married David Willock Wallace, and held their reception on

¹ Warranty Deed, English by Attorney to Gates, 20 June 1867, Land Deed Book 52, Page 210, Office of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence, Missouri.

² Ibid., Warranty Deed, Frederick F. Yeager to George P. Gates, 2 November 1868 (recorded 7 November 1868), Land Deed Record Book 74, Page 454.

³ A. Ruger, "Bird's Eye View Map of Independence, Missouri, 1868," lithograph, Jackson County Historical Society Archives.

⁴ Directory of Independence, 1888-1889 (Kansas City: R. S. Dillon and Company, 1888).

the lawn of the Gates house. It marked the first of three generations of wedding receptions held on the property. A society column in the Kansas City Journal presented a description:

The beautiful lawn surrounding the house was lighted with Chinese lantern, though the moon, which has so long been obscured by the clouds, has scarcely ever shone more brightly, and the night seemed to have been modeled for such an occasion as was the event of the wedding. Tables were set about on the lawn, on which a most delicious repast was served. Mrs. Gates, as hostess, rendered the repast all the more delicious by her endeavors to contribute to the enjoyment of all the guests.⁵

George P. Gates added sidewalks to the property after an October 8, 1883, city ordinance required each property owner along certain streets to build "second-class" sidewalks according to the following specifications:

Pine or oak timber, two inches thick, by five feet long, laid on three stringers 2 x 4, of oak or pine timber and securely fastened to same. The stringers to be nailed together by a cleat on each side of joint, not less than two feet long. Where said walk is over any place that is below grade of the street, it shall be supported on stringers nailed securely to upright post 4 x 4 inches, and not further apart than six feet.⁶

A wooden sidewalk was placed along the front of the Gates' property on Delaware Street. It was later replaced with a sidewalk of hexagonal limestone blocks around the turn of the century. Sidewalks on Blue Avenue appeared as early as 1887.⁷

⁵ "Gates-Wallace," Kansas City Journal (15 June 1883), p. 5, Williams research, park files.

⁶ "An Ordinance Requiring Sidewalks to be Built on Delaware, Pleasant, Hickman and Temple Streets," No. 25, approved 8 October 1883, Record Book of Ordinances, City of Independence, Missouri, Book B, p. 9, Office of the City Clerk, Independence, Missouri.

⁷ Ibid., "An Ordinance to build a sidewalk on the north side of Blue avenue, or boulevard, and Tan Yard Rd.," No. 150, 14 March 1887, p. 247.

As Independence changed from a frontier town to a small city, the city council ordered more beautification measures. Farm animals could not roam freely, but had to be confined by fencing.⁸ Property owners were required by city ordinance to keep weeds along streets and sidewalks under control. City fathers admonished citizens to cut grass and weeds up to the mid-point of all unpaved streets and alleys upon which their property fronted.⁹

Until 1885, water for the Gates house came from a subterranean source. A cistern adjacent to the rear southside kitchen porch supplied water to the home and grounds during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. George P. Gates believed he had tapped into a nearby spring, and was proud of the clear water he pumped out of the cistern. Because of increasing neighborhood home-building in the mid-1920s, the groundwater became contaminated and the cistern was sealed with a concrete cap.¹⁰

In 1885, Gates commissioned architect James W. Adams to build an imposing addition to the west and south ends of this structure at the cost of \$8,000. The entire home received water and gas systems.¹¹ A lithograph from The [Independence] Sentinel reveals the northwest front facade of the home. Four principal landscape features are noticeable: the front yard is relatively flat; a thirty-foot tree is a short distance west from the front porch while another is adjacent to the south side (Gates) porch; and a walkway leads from the front entrance to North Delaware Street. The lithograph confirms what the earliest-known photographs (circa 1900) reveal--no shrubbery or other substantive plantings obscure any of the home's intricate porch latticework or stone foundation.¹² This is in keeping with the Victorian-era landscaping ideal. (See Chapter One).

⁸ Ibid., "An Ordinance Restraining all kinds of stocks from running at large within the city limits," No. 64, approved 25 August 1884, pp. 136-7.

⁹ Ibid., "An Ordinance to Cut Weeds," No. 95, approved 13 July 1885, p. 169.

¹⁰ Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, interview, 14 June 1983, Independence, Missouri; and Robert H. Ferrell, ed., Dear Bess: The Letters From Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959 (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983), p. 322.

¹¹ "The Building Boom," The (Independence) Sentinel (2 January 1886), p. 4, Harry S. Truman Library and Jackson County Historical Society, Independence, Missouri.

¹² Ibid., "Residence of Geo. P. Gates," lithograph.

Photographs of the Gates house at the turn of the century show some of the characteristics of the yard. A simple decorative fence along the front, west side of the property was comprised of small wooden posts (spaced ten to twelve feet apart) with thick rope strung between them. Two larger posts of the same style graced the front walkway leading from the North Delaware Street sidewalk to the front entrance door. The configuration of the walkways in the front yard, including the curved sidewalk leading to the house's south side and rear, was the same as existed in 1982. A thick carpet of closely-cut grass covered the front yard. Several trees aligned in the front yard ranged in age and size. Aside from the trees, there were no other plantings visible in the front (west) or two side (north and south) yards.¹³ (See Appendix A, Figure 1).

Some seasonal vegetation did adorn the front facade, however. A photograph of Bess Wallace sitting on the front porch railing shows morning glories growing up strands of twine and a potted Boston fern hanging from the porch rafter.¹⁴ Another view taken near the spot where Bess Wallace sat, but looking east shows the north lawn was expansive with only two small trees and one bush in the distance away from the house.¹⁵

A view from the south yard looking northeast toward the old kitchen wing shows an equally sparse number of moderate-sized trees in the back yard. Again, there was no other vegetation.¹⁶ Another photograph taken from the Gates south porch area looking southwest reveals the Watson Memorial Methodist Church in the background beyond the expansive lawn. One older tree appears near the southwest corner of the property and a decorative metal fence about four feet high separates the yard from the alley. This fence undoubtedly followed the alley at least as far as the barn/carriage house. Until a house was built in 1914 on the lot across the alley to the south, the property at 221 North Delaware Street served as

¹³ Photographs of 219 North Delaware Street, circa 1900, west facade, number 82-212-2 and 82-59-104, (from the Truman home--an album of Wallace family, friends, and vacations), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

¹⁴ Ibid., Bess Wallace sitting on the northwest corner of the 219 North Delaware Street front porch, number 82-59-75.

¹⁵ Ibid., an unidentified young man standing near the northwest corner of the 219 North Delaware Street front porch, number 82-59-100.

¹⁶ Ibid., two men standing in the back yard of 219 North Delaware Street, looking northeast, number 82-59-114.

a garden area for another Independence family.¹⁷ (See Appendix A, Figure 2).

Two distinct areas comprised the Gates' back yard. The first was the main lawn directly behind (east of) the house with a dirt and gravel driveway leading to a large structure which the family called the "barn." (It was subsequently remodeled into a carriage house). The second was the garden area on Lot 1 which was separated from the rest of the yard by a wooden picket fence. The fence paralleled the driveway ten to fifteen feet to the east, a fixture which undoubtedly dated from the days before the Independence fencing laws when it was the property owner's responsibility to fence garden areas to keep roaming animals out. At least three small trees appeared in the grassy area between the driveway and the garden fence. Near the barn, the picket fence became a six-foot high trellis which was covered with vines. Shadowy background images indicate crude wooden outbuildings occupied the area immediately east of the barn.¹⁸ (See Appendix A, Figure 3). A 1907 Sanborn map indicates two small structures in this area; one was square-shaped while the other was rectangular on an east-west axis. It is unknown when Gates sold Lot 12, but it was before the turn of the century.¹⁹

An Independence native born in 1889 provided a general picture of landscape features in the North Delaware Street neighborhood during the 1890 to 1910 period. In a series of articles titled "Remembering Delaware Street," the author recalled:

Delaware Street started at Maple and went about eight blocks north. It has an imposing entrance for on the corner was one of those beautiful "wine glass elms."

¹⁷ Ibid., Frank Wallace and another man standing in the south yard of 219 North Delaware Street, looking southwest, number 82-59-93.

¹⁸ Ibid., people in the back yard of 219 North Delaware Street: two unidentified boys reclining on lawn (faint writing on photograph reads, "In Gates-Wallace back yard"), circa 1900-1905, number 72-3689; people left to right are Fred Wallace, Ethel and Nellie Noland, Frank Wallace, Bess Wallace, George Wallace, and Will Boger, circa 1904, number 66-277; people left to right are Bess Wallace, Nellie Noland, Frank Wallace, Ethel Noland, Fred Wallace, and Will Boger, circa 1904, number 82-59-76; Bess Wallace, circa 1904, number 82-59-99; and two unidentified men with a calf, circa 1900, number 82-59-121.

¹⁹ Fire Insurance Maps of Independence, Missouri, James F. Moore's Addition (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, September 1907), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The houses along Delaware Street were mostly Victorian, with large comfortable rooms, high ceilings, and windows with wooden shutters closed in the summer against the blazing sun. ...the rooms were surrounded with expansive lawns, trees, shrubbery, and at the back vegetable and flower gardens were often found. Also, there were barns and carriage houses, sometimes a wash house and a wood shed. Most people had their own horses and a cow or two.

From the garden sun-ripened vegetables were picked the morning they were to appear on the table. Nearby in Kansas City the finest meats were available. The black rich earth of Jackson County was a land of milk and honey. The people believed the important thing was to put the finest meals and most appetizing food that could be produced on the table.

The garden and yards along Delaware Street were lovely indeed. Spring brought the bridal wreath, the iris, the snowballs, and all the early bulbs, followed by a profusion of early summer flowers, and in the Fall, the late blooming blossoms flamed up to match the splendor of the autumn leaves.

The porches of the houses on Delaware Street, [were] where the people sat in the evening, their voices were a part of the evening. Friendly voices of good will between neighbors, an intimate connection of the life of the street.²⁰

The David Wallace family lived two blocks north at 608 North Delaware Street. Their oldest daughter, Elizabeth Virginia ("Bess"), spent a lot of time with her grandparents whom she called "Nana and Mama Gates." Bess Wallace and her friends often played bridge at the Gates house and club activities were held there. Centered around the Gates' barn/carriage house, the girls formed the "Cadiz Club" and staged children's plays written by Mary

²⁰ Elizabeth Paxton Forsling, "Remembering Delaware Street," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, Vol. IV, No. 12 (November 1963), appendix to Sue Gentry, Oral History Interview, 30 August 1971, by Dr. Philip C. Brooks, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

Paxton with dances arranged by her sister, Elizabeth. Bess served as business manager with profits designated for charity.²¹

A number of pre-World War I photographs of 219 North Delaware Street are extant primarily because of its new occupants in 1904. When David W. Wallace committed suicide in June 1903, Madge Gates Wallace took her four children to Colorado Springs, Colorado, to recover from her grief and humiliation. Upon their return to Independence, the Wallace family permanently moved into the Gates house to begin their lives anew. Their circle of friends remained the same, including the Nolands across the street at 216 North Delaware, relatives of Harry S Truman. Many valuable snapshots exist which feature the Wallaces and Nellie and Ethel Noland on the lawn of the Gates/Wallace house.

The emotional turmoil caused by David Wallace's suicide left deep scars. The once socially prominent, "queenly" Madge Gates Wallace became a virtual recluse within the confines of 219 North Delaware Street. The tragedy became a dark secret never to be discussed. It instilled within the Wallace family tighter bonding and a deeper sense of privacy, especially for Madge Wallace who drew her children ever closer to her.²² Despite the tragedy, family life continued in the spacious Gates/Wallace house.

The family owned at least one milk cow as late as the 1910s. A portion of Lot 1 served as pastureland. George Wallace, whose duty it was to milk the cow, unaffectionately referred to it as "Susie Damn." A photograph of a calf in the back yard is extant. Gates also owned horses at various times.²³ Bess Wallace kept calico chickens which were a 1911 subject of correspondence with Harry Truman. Harry gave Bess a recipe for "dipping" hens to

²¹ Ibid., and Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 12-13.

²² Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman. The long-term effects of David Wallace's suicide on the family are discussed throughout the book.

²³ Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, interview, 14 June 1983, Independence, Missouri; Assessor's Book of Real Estate, Independence, Missouri, for Year 1894; 1895; 1896; 1897; and 1898, City of Independence, Limestone Storage Facility, 16400 West Truman Road; and photograph of two unidentified young men and a calf in the back yard of 219 North Delaware Street, circa 1900, looking east towards the Gates' garden, number 82-59-121, Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

protect them from disease. At one point Truman wrote, "Maybe you can force that negro you have working for you to do it."²⁴

Most neighborhood families did employ black domestics and the Gates/ Wallace family was no exception. Black domestic workers came to the North Delaware Street homes each day from a nearby Afro-American community known as "The Neck." Each residence had at least one cook and "yard man" in their employ. The yard man cared for the lawn as well as any garden area.²⁵ Madge Gates Wallace once recalled an incident involving her father's black yard man "Luke." Remarking on the man's slow pace of laboring in the yard, George P. Gates asked his grandson Fred Wallace "to sight him on a tree to see if he was moving."²⁶

Harry Truman made frequent trips from the Truman's Grandview, Missouri, farm to 219 North Delaware Street to court Bess Wallace beginning in late 1910. Frank Baldus, a neighbor who lived immediately to the north at 610 West Blue Avenue from 1909 to 1919, remembered the Gates/Wallace property and the courtship. The eastern section of the Gates/Wallace barn/carriage house was a stable for George P. Gates' white horse while the western section housed a fringed surrey. (Sometime during this period, the horse and carriage gave way to automobiles owned by both George P. Gates and Harry S Truman.) Baldus also recalls Harry and Bess spending long summer evenings on the north side lawn of the house seated on a tall wooden, two-seat swing which stood among the lilac bushes. Sometimes the couple remained engaged in conversation on the swing as late as nine-thirty.²⁷

The Gates/Wallace back yard was the scene of gatherings by the many friends of the Wallace children. Watermelon feasts were held

²⁴ Robert Ferrell, ed., Dear Bess, pp. 29, 33. The letters are dated 17 April, 9 May, and 17 May 1911.

²⁵ Mary Paxton Keeley, Oral History Interview, Columbia, Missouri, 12 July 1966, by J. R. Fuchs, Harry S. Truman Library, pp. 49-50; Elizabeth Paxton Forsling, "Remembering Delaware Street," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, Vol. III, No. 8 (May 1962), p. 11, appended to Sue Gentry, Oral History Interview, 30 August 1971, Independence, Missouri, by Dr. Philip C. Brooks, Harry S. Truman Library; and Richard L. Miller, Truman: The Rise to Power (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1986), p. 17.

²⁶ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, p. 162.

²⁷ Frank Baldus to Sue Gentry, letter, 27 September 1983, files of Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri.

frequently. Whenever Harry Truman arrived from Grandview, "there always seemed to be a party in progress."²⁸

The property underwent a significant change when Gates divided Lot 1 between his grandsons as wedding presents. On March 15, 1915, Frank Gates Wallace received the east fifty feet of Lot 1 to build a home for himself and his bride, Natalie Ott. This home's address designation became 601 Van Horn (later Truman) Road. The following year, on August 22, 1916, Gates gave George Porterfield Wallace the fifty feet just to the west of his brother Frank's new house following George's marriage to Mary Frances (May) Southern. This new home became 605 Van Horn Road.²⁹

Photographs taken in 1915 from the home's widow's walk looking west and east along Van Horn Road reveal the state of the north lawn. In the extreme northwest corner where the wide hexagonal sidewalk of North Delaware Street intersected with the narrower concrete sidewalk of Van Horn Road, a small tree grew. A few yards to the south was another tree of equal height. To the east approximately fifteen yards, a young sapling, apparently freshly planted, appeared.³⁰ (See Appendix A, Figure 4). A view to the east revealed tall trees growing along Van Horn Road and only the Frank G. Wallace home in place. The lawn in this area has not been established and a large bush marked the spot where the front porch of the George P. Wallace house would be the following year. Separating 219 North Delaware Street from this area was the same tall picket fence which cordoned off the Gates garden. At the northern terminus of the single-lane gravel driveway was a wide slab of concrete leading onto the street.³¹ (See Appendix A, Figure 5).

With the construction of the two bungalow-style Wallace homes, the tradition of having an extensive vegetable garden passed, but not entirely. In the spring of 1917, May Wallace found volunteer

²⁸ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, p. 56.

²⁹ General Warranty Deeds: George P. and Elizabeth E. Gates to Frank G. Wallace (15 March 1915, Land Deed Record Book 334, Page 354) and George P. Wallace (22 August 1916, Land Deed Record Book 339, Page 360), Jackson County Courthouse, Office of Deeds, Independence, Missouri.

³⁰ Photographs of the north lawn of 219 North Delaware Street, taken from the widow's walk roof looking northwest, circa 1915, number 82-243-5, (taken from photographs found in the Truman home), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³¹ Ibid., looking east, number 82-243-4.

asparagus all over her front yard.³² Most likely, the family removed the former garden's picket fence after the George P. Wallace house was built, thus unifying the Gates/Wallace compound.

The partition of the garden plots for her two oldest sons revealed Madge's influence over her father as well as her intention to keep her children close at hand. Margaret Truman later wrote of her two uncles:

There they began their wedded lives, under their mother's direct observation. They and their wives soon learned that Madge Wallace never went to bed until all the lights in these two houses were out. She never permitted either wife to walk past 219 North Delaware Street without emerging to ask where she was going.³³

The Wallace bungalows were an integral part of 219 North Delaware Street which was now referred to in the family's jargon as "the Big House."

Harry and Bess became officially engaged during the summer of 1917, shortly before Harry's National Guard unit passed into the service of the mobilizing U.S. Army. Distressed about leaving his sweetheart behind, Harry wrote in an August 11 letter, "I wish I was in your backyard."³⁴ The comment evokes the tender memories of this favorite courtship spot.

While Truman fought in France, George P. Gates died on June 25, 1918, at the age of eighty-three.³⁵ Three business partners, all of whom were relatives, were estate trustees.³⁶ The house and property of 219 North Delaware Street, along with the remaining 14.18 feet of Lot 1, valued at \$8,500, were bequeathed to no one, but remained within the trust. Because the trustees were all

³² Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, interview, 14 June 1983, Independence, Missouri.

³³ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, pp. 55-56.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

³⁵ "Closed a Useful Life," Examiner (26 June 1918), p. 1, folder-Gates, George P., Research Room Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library.

³⁶ Last Will and Testament of George Porterfield Gates, 19 June 1916, No. 4177, Estate of G. P. Gates, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence, Missouri.

family members, Mrs. Elizabeth Gates and Madge Gates Wallace's family continued to live in the house.

George P. Gates' death and the end of World War I signaled the end of a significant period of 219 North Delaware Street's history. For the next thirty years, the house reflected the tastes of Madge Wallace. During this era Harry Truman married Bess Wallace, moved into the Gates/Wallace house, and emerged onto the stage of American state and national politics.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

Madge Wallace's 219 North Delaware Street, 1918-1945

The reception following Harry and Bess Truman's wedding on June 28, 1919, was the second reception held at the Gates/Wallace home. Photographs of the wedding party were taken, presumably in the north side yard which paralleled Van Horn Road. While elements of the neighborhood are not readily apparent, the couple and their entourage stood in front of a ten-foot-high large-leaved bush surrounded by a ring of mulch.¹

Following their honeymoon, the Trumans moved into 219 North Delaware Street to begin their married life. Bess continued her role as mistress of the house, caring for her grandmother, mother, and youngest brother Fred Wallace. Physical property changes in 1919 saw the removal of the two garden outbuildings immediately east of the barn/carriage house. A small one-car garage was built to house May Wallace's automobile, a gift from her father. The garage, about fifteen feet east of the carriage house, permitted an entrance way from the alley to the south of the property. From the Gates/Wallace driveway entrance on Van Horn Road, it was now possible for automobiles to travel around the carriage house and proceed west into the alley to North Delaware Street.²

While in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Elizabeth Emery Gates (Bess Truman's grandmother) died on June 19, 1924, at the age of eighty-three.³ Her estate, valued at \$56,013.09, was given to her son, Frank E. Gates, to be used "for his maintenance and comfort.

¹ Photograph of Truman wedding party at 219 North Delaware Street, 28 June 1919, number 73-1667, Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

² Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, interview, 14 June 1983, Independence, Missouri; and Fire Insurance Maps of Independence, Missouri, James F. Moore's Addition (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, August 1926), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³ "Mrs. George P. Gates Dead," (The Independence) Examiner (20 June 1924), p. 1, folder-A172 Woodson-McCoy Scrapbook, circa 1875-1925, newspaper clippings, Jackson County Historical Society, Independence, Missouri.

The remainder after his death to go to my other children."⁴ Because of ill health, Frank Gates remained in Colorado, and approved his sister's acquisition of the family home in Independence from the trust of their father's estate. Madge Wallace purchased Lots 2 and 3 and the west 14.18 feet of Lot 1 on October 4, 1924, for \$10,000.⁵ Two years later Madge Wallace limited her property to simply Lots 2 and 3 by deeding her section of Lot 1 to George and May Wallace.⁶

The Wallace/Truman house underwent profound landscape changes in this post-World War I period. American tastes in many areas changed. Independence and the North Delaware Street neighborhood did not remain the same. Gone was the Victorian affection for featuring architecture to the near exclusion of residential landscaping. In the early 1920s, a frenzy of planting occurred. At 219 North Delaware Street, the landscaping assumed the personal tastes of Madge Gates Wallace and her family.

Reflecting American landscaping practices of the early twentieth century, spirea, planted adjacent to the foundation, grew in abundance around the north, west (front), and south perimeters of the Wallace/Truman house. (See Chapter One). A photograph of the home from the 1920s with the west first floor porches and windows covered by awnings, reveals shaggy spirea bushes thriving in much the same manner as in 1982. Long shoots of spirea protruded above the porch balusters as much as a foot.⁷ (See Appendix A, Figure 6). A picture of baby Margaret Truman (born February 17, 1924) in her perambulator on the front porch depicts spirea shoots attaining heights of two feet above the balusters.⁸

⁴ Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Emery Gates, 31 October 1917, No. 4941, Office of the Probate Court, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence, Missouri.

⁵ Ibid.; In the Matter of the Appraisal of the Estate of Elizabeth Gates, Report of Appraiser, 14 July 1924, and Final Settlement of the Estate of Elizabeth Emery Gates, Independence Probate Court, No. 4941.

⁶ Missouri Warranty Deed, Madge Gates Wallace to George P. and Mary S. Wallace, 4 September 1926, Land Book 492, Page 422, No. 219645, Office of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse.

⁷ Photograph of 219 North Delaware Street with awnings, looking east, number 82-474, Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁸ Photograph of baby Mary Margaret Truman in perambulator on front porch of 219 North Delaware Street, circa 1924, unpaginated photographic section, Monte M. Poen, ed., Letters Home by Harry Truman (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984).

The grapevine was likewise already well-established in 1924. A proud Harry S Truman holding his infant daughter stood in the grass for a fall 1924 snapshot, just south of the concrete sidewalk which parallels the rear south side kitchen porch. In the background, prolific grapevines grew in all directions over the porch, up to the eaves. The vines were assisted by ropes arranged diagonally, criss-crossing in large "X"s from the porch railing to the eaves. No other plantings were in this area.⁹ (See Appendix A, Figure 7).

The family followed many of the popular landscaping practices of the early twentieth century "Arts and Crafts" movement. (See Chapter One). Madge Wallace and Bess Truman's love for flowers was easily seen around the home. The family built a rose arbor (or "pergola" as the family referred to it) sometime between 1924 and 1934. The wooden pergola was white with eight hollow wooden doric columns standing on a stone base with red brick edging. Diamond-shaped latticework enclosed the ends of the pergola leaving the center open. Running the length of the pergola on top of the columns was a square wooden, beamed framework. Rafters with decorative ends crossed the top.¹⁰ (See Appendix A, Figure 8).

Climbing roses graced the pergola, an attractive accent to Madge's rose garden on the northeast lawn. A May 1928 picture features rose bushes arranged in a geometric pattern in this area. A simple whitewashed picket fence with diamond-shaped lattice work similar to the pergola's, paralleled the sidewalk along Van Horn Road. The fence stretched from the driveway entrance for approximately twenty to thirty yards westward. Rose bushes may have followed a portion or the entire length of the fence. A simple flat stone bench on a north-south axis was available for anyone who wanted to enjoy the beauty of the rose garden area. Similar sized plantings (which may have also been rose bushes)

⁹ Photograph of Harry Truman holding his infant daughter near the south kitchen porch of 219 North Delaware Street, fall 1924, number 82-315-6, Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. Other photographs which substantiate no other plantings save the grapevine on the south and east sides of the kitchen porch are 82-321-4 and 82-321-3, both of which are circa 1930.

¹⁰ Ron Cockrell, "Harry S Truman National Historic Site," National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form, documentation accepted 31 May 1985 (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 1984), Description, p. 3.

lined the gravel driveway. The driveway itself was lined with closely-spaced bricks jutting diagonally out of the ground.¹¹

Another item in Mrs. Wallace's rose garden was a sundial, likewise inspired by the "Arts and Crafts" movement. Though the original date of its appearance is unknown, the sundial sat on a concrete stand in the northeast side yard, immediately north of the pergola since the late 1920s, the time of Margaret Truman's early childhood. Initially the sundial sat on a concrete stand in the middle of four rose gardens with grass walkways between them. Shortly before the Second World War, the rose gardens were covered over with sod and the sundial periodically removed so the area could be used as a badminton or croquet court. (See Appendix A, Figure 9). In Margaret Truman's book, Souvenir, the sundial's inscription appeared in the preface:

My Face Marks the Sunny Hours.
What Can You Say of Yours?

Along the alley, from the barn to the sidewalk on North Delaware Street, was another fence made of wire with a board on top and at the bottom.¹² This apparently replaced the more decorative fence present at the turn of the century.

The yard also served as the playground for Margaret and the other girls of the neighborhood. The principal reason for this designation involved the spaciousness of the lawn areas as well as a fear shared by the adult residents of the home. As Harry S Truman gained political prominence by serving on the Jackson County Court, his family automatically became targets of reprisal or extortion. When young Margaret came close to being kidnapped

¹¹ Photograph of Truman family in back yard of 219 North Delaware Street, circa May 1928, number 82-318, Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

¹² A mock orange which presently grows on the south side of the south alley fence has a segment of wire fence entwined within the bush. This may be a remnant of this earlier fence. Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, interview, 14 June 1983, Independence, Missouri; and Ron Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman Daniel at the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri, November 17, 1983 (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 1983), p. 27.

from her first grade classroom, she was thereafter escorted to and from school by a family member.¹³ This close scrutiny extended to play time; it was an added precaution to have the children play in the yard where Madge, Bess, May, Natalie, or any of the servants could watch them during the day.

Besides Margaret's numerous toys, the girls had plenty of trees to climb. They used the trees for more than climbing, however. Margaret, who took summertime naps on the screened second floor sleeping porch, could easily see the sleeping porch used by friends Betty and Sue Ogden at 211 North Delaware Street. By shinnying out on tree limbs, the girls were able to rig a communication network using strings and wires to exchange messages and small objects. The system did have its drawbacks. Items would often become stuck in the branches or fall into the alley. When mishaps such as this occurred during naptime, caution was required to sneak out of the house and retrieve the objects.¹⁴

The playground centered in the area of the southeast yard and the driveway. Young "Margie" had many one- to four-wheeled conveyances which were used on the gravel driveway. Dirt and gravel were manipulated to create a network of roads and intersections. Dust whipped up by this frenetic activity during the dry summer months drifted into the house and caused frequent cleaning. Because of the heat, the adults often sat on the back porch listening to the cacophony of squeals and screams.

In addition to bikes, wagons, and tricycles, the yard was stocked with swings, a teeter-totter, a trapeze, and a slide. The children loved to put the garden hose at the top of the wooden slide, ride the board down, and splash into the mud puddle at the bottom.¹⁵

The girls also dug channels around the back yard to sail half-shells of English walnuts. Margaret Truman's description of the course of the small stream points to the diversity of the plants in the Wallace/Truman yard:

It was kind of a canal, beginning at the drip faucet at the side of the house and running muddily through the mint bed, tumbling with waterfalls downward through Grandmother Wallace's

¹³ Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1973), pp. 77-8.

¹⁴ Margaret Truman, Souvenir: Margaret Truman's Own Story (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), p. 30.

¹⁵ Ron Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman, p. 26.

lilies-of-the-valley (which were ruthlessly uprooted), and on into the rose garden where further depredation took place. It looked, indeed, as if a bunch of moles had got on top of the ground and continued their architecture. It was quite a problem to raise flowers in that weather and at this vantage I have a better understanding of the wan looks of my grandmother when she regarded the fallen petals of her treasured Talismans.¹⁶

The gang of girls used an abandoned chicken coop in the adjoining Ogden back yard as their clubhouse. They called themselves the "Henhouse Hicks," and the membership was comprised of Margaret Truman; Betty and Sue Ogden; Jane Berridge; Marie, Harriet, Mona, and Barbara Allen; Dory Lou Compton; and Mary Shaw. Margie coordinated the plays staged in the back yard or in the barn. Proceeds went to charity. Their activities were remarkably similar to those of the Cadiz Club of Bess Wallace Truman's generation. The Henhouse Hicks also published a weekly newspaper. One edition, which featured Frank Wallace splitting the seat of his pants while weeding the garden, sold out because Margie's embarrassed uncle purchased all the copies.¹⁷

Though there were obviously a number of large trees on the grounds of 219 North Delaware before this period (as evidenced by historic photographs), most of the trees that were extant on the grounds in 1982 were present during this time. The trees provided shade during the hot Missouri summers and helped to keep down the temperature inside the house. In keeping with the neighborhood feature of tree-lined streets, four sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) paralleled North Delaware Street. Collectively, the trees form yet another type of barrier. Because sugar maples grow between seventy-five and 120 feet tall and about three-fourths as wide, the trees furnished excellent shade on the lawn as well as for the house. No doubt the family also prized them for their magnificent

¹⁶ Margaret Truman, Souvenir: Margaret Truman's Own Story (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), p. 30.

¹⁷ Mrs. Margaret Truman Daniel (remarks upon the presentation of the Harry S Truman Public Service Award in Independence, Missouri, May 11, 1984), submitted by the Hon. Ike Skelton (D.-Mo.) in the House of Representatives, 11 June 1984, Congressional Record, Extensions of Remarks (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 11 June 1984), p. E2719.

fall colors which shift from green to yellow to orange, and finally end in a bright scarlet.¹⁸

Several elm trees in the north yard skirting Van Horn Road also provided good shade for the house and grounds. Elms are vase-shaped and may grow to heights of 120 feet and half as wide.¹⁹

A relation of the American elm is the hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), one of which grows east of the driveway, close to the southwest corner of the George P. Wallace house. It is also valued for shade. The hackberry tree, unlike the American elm, is very resistant to diseases, and grows well in unfavorable areas.²⁰

Located directly south of the back porch, in the inner part of the "L," is the only shingle oak (*Quercus imbricaria*) on the property. The shingle oak, which may reach heights up to seventy-five feet, grows best in the east central United States and produces a half-inch acorn.²¹

Thomas ("T. B.") Saulter served as the family's tree surgeon beginning in the early 1930s. Truman subsequently gave Saulter work trimming the trees at his home as well as encouraging other friends in Independence to do likewise. Saulter's first project at 219 North Delaware Street involved trimming the trees adjacent to the house to prevent damage. He and his crew also cleaned out the structure's guttering system.²²

A circa 1930 photograph of Natalie Wallace and Margaret Truman standing inside the pergola with their backs to the north reveals Madge Wallace's rose garden had a circular pattern at this time. The stone bench is midway in the north side yard facing the rose garden. Behind it is a row of thick bushes (probably spirea and/or lilac) which forms a natural barrier, obscuring any view toward North Delaware Street. No trees existed in the northeast yard at this time, possibly to prevent too much shading of the rose

¹⁸ Norman Taylor, The Guide To Garden Shrubs and Trees (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 172.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 118.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

²¹ Arthur T. Viertel, Trees, Shrubs and Vines (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1970), entry #103.

²² Thomas (T. B.) Saulter, interview with Pamela Smoot, 12 December 1985, 8401 Marsh, Raytown, Missouri.

garden.²³ An August 11, 1935, photograph of Margaret standing at the east end of the pergola, however, shows a tree growing at this end. (Subsequent photographs reveal another tree growing at the west end of the pergola.) Small decorative bushes grace each corner of the pergola. The sundial also appears in the middle of the northeast yard.²⁴

Another photograph, also taken on August 11, 1935, reveals the grapevine thriving along the south facade of the back porch. Ground cover in the small planting bed between the sidewalk and the porch latticework did not contain flowers, but a mixture of grass and weeds. The lawn in this area was very sparse with weeds and bare ground readily apparent. A very tall bush stood just south of where the sidewalk curves to lead to the east side of the back porch.²⁵

The economic hardship of the Great Depression did not pass over 219 North Delaware Street. While Madge Wallace lived comfortably from the income from her stock in the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company and several inheritances, her "wealth" could only be counted in the tens of thousands of dollars. The Trumans themselves existed on a tight budget which grew ever tighter when Jackson County salaries were cut in half. Cutbacks in household domestic help probably also occurred with proportionate effects on landscaping.

A new family member moved into the home in 1930 when Fred Wallace took Christine Meyer as his bride. The three Wallace aunts and uncles joined the Trumans in marathon croquet games in the back yard. Although the time of the transition is unclear, the games probably took place on the relatively flat northeast lawn and overtook much of Madge Wallace's expansive rose garden. One photograph judged to be taken around 1939 shows the lawn nicely sodded with only the sundial, and a paving stone before it, interrupting the expanse. Spirea bushes ran from the driveway westward along the diamond-shaped latticework of the Van Horn Road picket fence. Shrubbery enclosed this lawn area on the north and west sides, with the house and pergola to the south, and the

²³ Margaret Truman, Letters From Father: The Truman Family's Personal Correspondence (New York: Arbor House, 1981), p. 86.

²⁴ Photograph of Margaret Truman standing by the east end of the pergola at 219 North Delaware Street, 11 August 1935, number 82-181, Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

²⁵ Ibid., photograph of Margaret Truman with four friends on the lawn of 219 North Delaware Street before the south, rear porch, 11 August 1935, number 82-182-2 (from photographs found in the Truman home).

driveway and remnant patches of rose and flower gardens to the east.²⁶ (See Appendix A, Figure 9).

The extended family unit remained very close with frequent interaction between the three homes. Bess Truman did not leave "Wallaceville," as her daughter jokingly referred to it, to help her husband campaign for U.S. Senator in 1934.²⁷ When Harry Truman won the election, the harsh realization sunk in that the Trumans would be spending at least six months of each year living in Washington, D.C. In retrospect, Margaret Truman stated:

...leaving Delaware Street was more painful and threatening to Bess than it was to me. The very time of the year compounded the pain; 219 North Delaware Street was particularly beautiful in November. The huge maple trees in the yard were fiery red in the glowing sunshine and the full spirea bushes overhanging the porch added an extra touch of glory.²⁸

Because of the responsibilities of the Senate, the Truman family was often separated. Margaret spent her fall semesters attending public school in Independence and the spring at Gunston Hall, a private girls school in the District of Columbia. During the summer, Bess and Margaret returned to Missouri to spend time with the Wallace family. Harry Truman came home during holidays and other Senate recesses. Although she missed Bess terribly, Madge kept in touch with an avalanche of letters which sometimes described elements of the yard. In a February 1941 letter, Madge wrote to granddaughter Margaret: "It is a wonderful morning--just like Spring. We have the woodpeckers, robins and I heard a rain crow this morning before I got up."²⁹

In 1941, as turmoil enveloped Europe and the Far East, Congress voted to remain in session until the world crisis abated. In early September 1941, the Trumans became full-time residents of

²⁶ Ibid., photograph of the sundial taken from inside the pergola at 219 North Delaware Street, circa 1939, number 83-4-7; and Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, p. 431.

²⁷ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, p. 124.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

²⁹ Margaret Truman, Letters From Father, p. 223.

Washington, D.C., returning home to Independence only during summertime, vacations, and holidays.³⁰

A number of early 1940s photographs of the flower garden area along the west side of the driveway reveal the pride of family members posing alongside flowers whose stems reach a height of five feet. Roses and other flowers existed in three separate, rectangular (thin and narrow) beds which paralleled the driveway. A foot-wide strip of grass separated the beds from the gravel driveway. A line of spirea and lilacs dominated along Van Horn Road and it is possible that the vigorous bushes overtook the picket fence forcing its removal. A row of spirea extended thirty feet southward on the east side of the driveway emphasizing the property division with George Wallace's house. An equal distance of peonies hugged this same side of the driveway.³¹

A photographic view of the east (rear) facade of the home taken at this same time is particularly revealing. A small rose garden in the same location and proportion as that found in 1982 was on the west side of the driveway within three feet of where the walkway led to the house. It is interesting to note that the concrete sidewalk originating from the rear entrances inside the "L" curves around the rear porch toward the pergola. Only systematically placed stepping stones extend from this sidewalk to the driveway. Where the sidewalk and stepping stones meet, a small bush existed just to the south. The sizeable clump of spirea surrounding the large pin oak in this "L" area was also well established and conformed to 1982 proportions. A simple white wooden trellis with square-shaped latticework covered the first floor Gates bathroom window. The trellis, which was removed by the 1960s, was covered by a climbing vine which nearly obscured the window. Two large bushes, possibly lilac, were to the east of the back, rear (east) porch and largely blocked the view from the porch. Decorative plantings surrounded the pergola as did two large trees on the west and east ends of this structure.³² (See Appendix A, Figures 10 and 11).

In the spring of 1943, Fred and Christine Wallace and their two children (David, born in 1933; and Marian, born in 1937) moved

³⁰ Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1973), p. 137.

³¹ Photographs of the driveway entrance area and flower gardens at 219 North Delaware Street, circa early 1940s, number 83-85, 83-88-1, 83-88-2, 83-88-3, and 83-88-5 (from photographs found in the Truman home), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³² Ibid., photographs of the east (rear) facade of 219 North Delaware Street, circa early 1940s, number 83-88-4.

to Denver where Fred took a higher-paying job. According to Margaret:

The family decided they could not leave Grandmother Wallace alone at 219 North Delaware Street and moved her to a small apartment on nearby Maple Avenue. She hated it. She missed her garden, her spacious kitchen, the big old house that enabled her to feel she was still Madge Gates, in spite of her sorrow.³³

In June 1943, Madge Wallace moved to Denver for at least a year to live with Fred and Christine Wallace. She occasionally also stayed with the Trumans in Washington, D.C. Two nineteen North Delaware Street remained largely unoccupied, under the supervision of the occupants of the two Wallace bungalows. For the family budget, the austere economics of the Depression, and now the wartime shortages, continued. With the home's principal occupants gone for most of the year (excluding summertime), maintenance of the house and grounds was most likely performed at minimal levels. Minimal landscape maintenance would involve cutting the grass whenever necessary and trimming the bushes at the end of the growing season (if then). The predictable result was that the empty Wallace/Truman home began to appear neglected and weather-beaten.

One significant change to the landscape in the early 1940s did involve the removal of two large sugar maple trees in the southwest front yard. The stately old trees were already devoid of lower limbs exposing nearly twenty feet of massive trunks. A sapling was already growing between the two behemoths. Apparently, only the tree in the southwest corner was replaced; the reasoning for not replacing the other may have involved a desire to keep the front view of the home unobstructed.³⁴

On July 22, 1944, Harry Truman received the vice-presidential nomination from the Democratic Party. A photograph of the front of the home taken on that day showed a landscape in desperate need of attention. The grass was shaggy and weeds thrived in the cracks of the sidewalks. The small sapling stretched to nearly rooftop-

³³ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, p. 218.

³⁴ Photograph of 219 North Delaware Street, looking northeast, circa early 1940s, number 66-2898, Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. This is an International News Photo used on April 12, 1945. Because these large trees did not exist as early as 1944, the photograph probably was obtained locally and was, therefore, not current.

level with many low-hanging branches. The spirea surrounding the home was unusually wild and unkept.³⁵

The Trumans soon returned home. Two days later they held a public reception on the lawn. About 3,000 people came by to shake hands and congratulate the Trumans who stood just north of the pergola.³⁶ A photograph of the Truman family standing in front of 219 North Delaware Street appeared in the August 21, 1944, edition of Life magazine. It reveals no change in the overgrown condition of the landscape except the recently mowed grass.³⁷

Other photographs from this period highlight the ever-popular pergola area. Large shrubs dominated the pergola's east end. With other tall vegetation to the north, Van Horn Road was not visible. The lawn to the north of the pergola did not receive much sunlight because of the two elm trees in this area and was heavily infiltrated with clover and other ground cover.³⁸

Following the success of the Roosevelt-Truman ticket in the fall of 1944, Harry Truman began serving as Vice President of the United States in January 1945. Spring came early to Independence and by early April, the wild spirea recommenced their flourishing growth. The grass also required cutting with dandelions and healthy clumps of grass contrasting sharply with extensive areas of turf where the grass lay lifeless, awaiting new spring growth to break through.³⁹ (See Appendix A, Figure 12).

The home of the Vice President plainly reflected its years of neglect and seasonal occupation. The events of April 12, 1945, however, determined that this condition would soon change. With

³⁵ Ibid., photographs of 219 North Delaware Street, looking east, 22 July 1944, number 77-75 (ACME photo, Truman Wing Collection).

³⁶ Ibid., photograph of Harry and Bess Truman standing in front of the pergola at 219 North Delaware Street, 27 July 1944, number 77-78, (ACME photo, Truman Wing Collection).

³⁷ Ibid., photograph of the Truman family standing on the front lawn of 219 North Delaware Street, number 63-1499-19 (Life Magazine, 21 August 1944, "Truman of Missouri").

³⁸ Ibid., photographs of Margaret Truman standing in the pergola area of 219 North Delaware Street, circa 1944, numbers 86-108-3 and 86-108-4, looking north and east (from the papers of Margaret Truman Daniel).

³⁹ Ibid., photographs of the west, front facade of 219 North Delaware Street, undated/circa early April 1945, number 67-3886; and undated/circa 15 April 1945, number 66-2963.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's death, Harry S Truman found himself President of the United States. The family and its beloved 219 North Delaware Street would be receiving a lot more attention.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Truman's Summer White House, 1945-1953

With Harry Truman in the White House, the United States press corps naturally began making comparisons between the former and current occupants of the Oval Office. Two nineteen North Delaware Street likewise was likened to Roosevelt's stylish Hyde Park residence.¹ The appearance of the Wallace/Truman house, pictured in newspapers and magazines across the country, sharply contrasted with the stately grandeur of Hyde Park. Aware of the publicity her family home was receiving, Bess Truman hired Independence contractor Orville Campbell to paint the home a brilliant white and repair the roof and porches.

Friends and neighbors, aware of Bess Truman's and Madge Wallace's preference of spending the summertime in Independence, bestowed the title "Summer White House" to 219 North Delaware Street,² a name which was used even in the dead of winter. The spring was devoted to sprucing up the home and grounds prior to the arrival of the First Family. Harrison Irving, a black yard man who had worked for the family for twelve years, concentrated on the area of the back porch and pergola, the family's favorite area. A newspaper reported:

Flat on the ground below the high back porch were a 45-year-old grapevine and a climbing rose vine with a number of bright red blossoms. The painters were working on the rear of the home.

"I'm going to get rid of the old grapevine," George Wallace said. "But I've got to get that rose vine fastened up again some way before they

¹ "New 'Hyde Park' of the West," Examiner (13 April 1945), p. 4, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Missouri.

² Ibid., "Presidential Home Town Abode To Get Some External Repairs," Examiner (3 May 1945), p. 1.

get in. If she (his mother) sees it, she'll have a fit."³

Despite George's threat to do away with the grapevines, the old plants survived the "sprucing up" and soon reestablished themselves along the south, rear porch.

Aside from work done on the Wallace/Truman home, the workmen also painted the pergola and a dog house near the barn, close to some spirea near the alley. The doghouse, underneath the south window on the barn's west wall, belonged to a three-year-old brown and white dog owned by David and Marian Wallace. "Spotty" vacated the house to make room for Margaret's new pet, "Mike," an Irish setter. Left behind when his owners moved to Denver, Spotty was taken in by George and May Wallace.⁴ The doghouse was subsequently moved to an area away from the barn, the location of which is unknown. A photograph of Margaret playing with a small spotted dog on the northeast lawn is extant. The picture shows a tall tree thirty feet north from the study [Room 109] and tall shrubs obscured the kitchen area. Wire hoops, a stake, a mallet, and a ball are all present, indicating the family's fondness for playing croquet on the northeast lawn.⁵

Years of neglect disappeared shortly before President Truman arrived for his first visit home since assuming the presidency. The Summer White House appeared gleaming white and freshly manicured as a 34-foot flagpole was erected on the northwest lawn on June 25. Bess Truman and Madge Wallace selected the location. Presented to the Truman family on behalf of the city by Mayor Roger Sermon, the flagpole honored the President's first homecoming. The Secret Service agents were charged with raising and lowering the

³ "Pride Fills Town," Kansas City Star (3 June 1945), file-HST Mrs. 1937-45 No. 1, Kansas City Star Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁴ Ibid., photograph of the front, west facade of 219 North Delaware Street, spring 1945, number 66-2962, (United Press International), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri; and Invoice, Orville Campbell to Mrs. D. W. Wallace, Recap Sheet 1 August 1945, Job 222, Papers of the President of the United States, 1945-1953, President's Secretary's Files, folder-Personal Statements, Financial--Bills, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁵ Photograph of Margaret Truman playing with a small spotted dog on the northeast lawn of 219 North Delaware Street, circa 1945, number 77-2728, looking southwest, Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

flag which became a signal that the President and his family were in residence.⁶

Harry Truman, a Senator/Vice President-Elect when he left Independence in December 1944, returned as President of the United States on June 27, 1945. The crisp, fresh appearance of his home was in sharp contrast to the years of neglect and even the previous month when scaffolding jutted out of the spirea onto the house.⁷ The well-trimmed lawn was marked by equally sculpted spirea. Because the shrubs at this time were of varying shapes and sizes, it was not possible to trim them to any uniform specification.⁸

In response to reporters' pleas to pose for informal photographs, President Truman set a three o'clock appointment on June 30. The last afternoon of his four-day visit, the President and his daughter emerged from the house at the correct time. Photographs were to be taken in the back yard near the pergola. It soon became apparent that Bess Truman had refused to participate. Harry Truman asked that the photo session continue without the First Lady.⁹

Some of the photographs which survive provide remarkable evidence of the Wallace/Truman back yard. A ring of shrubs (mostly

⁶ "Flag Pole Gift For Truman Yard: Through Efforts of City and Amer. Legion & Several Individuals, Stand Is Being Erected on Lawn," Examiner (25 June 1945), p. 1 and "City Is Scrubbed Up and Shined for Visit of Its Favorite Son," Examiner (26 June 1945), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch; "Busy On Truman Plans: Jackson County Prepares A Welcome For President," Kansas City Star (26 June 1945), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S July-Sept. 1945, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library; and Paul P. Kennedy, "Home Town Opens Arms For Truman: Independence Would Welcome Him as Neighbor, But Many Doubt He Will Return," New York Times (10 December 1952), p. 1, White House Scrapbooks, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁷ Photograph of scaffolding and workmen surrounding 219 North Delaware Street, looking southeast, 22 May 1945, number 70-1046, (Kansas City Star/Associated Press), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁸ Ibid., front, west facade, 5 June 1945, number 66-2897 (ACME Newspapers); 27 June 1945, number 65-3360 (George Dodsworth); and no date/circa June 1945, number 62-121 (Commercial Photo Company, Kansas City, Missouri), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁹ Drew Pearson, "The Trumans and The Public," Kansas City Times (11 October 1945), file-HST May-Dec. 1945 No. 4, Kansas City Star Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

spirea) ran from the west end of the pergola to a point roughly even with the easternmost (rear) wall of the kitchen. From here the row of shrubbery turned northward toward Van Horn Road from where it swung east until it reached the driveway entrance. The shrubbery was at different heights, but averaged from four to five feet.

For anyone coming into the yard from the stairway descending from the small back porch, the opening in the pergola provided the only direct access to the northeast yard. While small climbing rose vines were visible on the pergola latticework, they did not dominate the structure. The ground was also visible within the pergola indicating that no plantings were permitted to grow there except turf. Also, a small concrete birdbath stood less than a yard south of the pergola. In the distance, a large tree¹⁰ and bush were at the northwest corner of the carriage house where both garage doors were rolled up.

The condition of the lawn was also apparent. The turf was not uniform. Varying types of grass and competing ground cover (clover, dandelions, etc.) were present.¹¹ (See Appendix A, Figures 13 and 14).

The family continued to utilize the services of tree surgeon T. B. Saulter. Saulter's prosperous business, which included several teams composed of seven to twelve men, also specialized in trimming shrubbery, fertilizing the lawn, and spraying trees to combat insects. Bess Truman took the lead in supervising all landscape work while Madge Wallace seldom, if ever, issued any instructions. During the 1940s, a severe infestation of cankerworms brought Saulter to 219 North Delaware Street to spray all the trees and systematically end the threat. Saulter seldom had to be summoned to the home by Bess Truman; rather, he often drove by to examine the property. If he saw a broken limb, he would dispatch a team to take it out, frequently not bothering to send a bill. Any tree wounds were immediately treated with a

¹⁰ The Truman's tree surgeon, T. B. Saulter, later stated that he removed a hickory tree "by the garage." That hickory is undoubtedly the tree seen in the 1945 photograph. See Thomas Saulter, interview with Pamela Smoot, 12 December 1985, Raytown, Missouri, files of Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

¹¹ Uninventoried slides of Harry and Margaret Truman in the back yard of 219 North Delaware Street, 30 June 1945, donated by Carol Shipp, Princeton, Illinois, 16 August 1986 (from the collection of Orland Murphy, Oak Park, Illinois), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

sealant (roofing compound). All sucker shoots were also removed on a regular basis.¹²

One of the most noticeable changes to the grounds came in late 1945, thanks to the U.S. Secret Service's mission to protect the First Family. The presence of Secret Service agents at 219 North Delaware Street particularly disturbed Bess Truman who refused to have the men stationed inside her home. Since April, the agents operated out of the west side of the barn/carriage house. There was a clear need for a place with adequate utilities--especially heat during wintertime--for the men. Although the Trumans considered it an intrusion of their privacy, they agreed to the construction of a small security booth adjacent to the west side of the carriage house.

Paid for by government funds, the booth cost \$1,200. The small white wooden structure consisted of windows on three sides for good visibility of the grounds. The booth was completed by the time the female members of the First Family arrived for the holidays during the third week of December 1945.¹³

The Secret Service also advocated that the shubbery around the house be trimmed to eliminate hiding places for potential intruders.¹⁴ It is apparent that Bess Truman did not accede to this request because the omnipresent spirea remained overgrown. The First Lady would not have wanted to make any further changes to the comfortable setting of her yard just to placate the Secret Service. While she might reluctantly accept their direction in Washington, D.C., she placed them on notice that in Independence, she was the

¹² Thomas (T. B.) Saulter, interview with Pamela Smoot, 12 December 1985, Raytown, Missouri.

¹³ "A Quiet Truman Day," Kansas City Star (21 December 1945), file-HST Christmas 1945, Kansas City Star Library, Kansas City, Missouri; "Expenditure of Federal Funds In Support of Presidential Properties," Fifteenth Report by the Committee on Government Operations, 20 May 1974, Union Calendar No. 490, 93d Congress, 2d Session, House Report No. 93-1052, p. 51, folder-Presidential Properties, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library; Sue Gentry, interview, 22 June 1983, Independence, Missouri; and Ron Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Mrs. Margaret Truman Daniel at the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri, November 17, 1983 (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 1983), p. 31.

¹⁴ "Harry Truman's Missouri," Life (July 1945), p. 83, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1945, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library.

boss and she could come and go as she pleased.¹⁵ The unruly spirea, therefore, continued to provide the Wallace/Truman family insulation from the prying eyes of the American public.

Christmas of 1945 produced tension and heated words between Harry and Bess Truman when the President was only able to schedule one day at home in Independence. Upon his return to the White House, he wrote a stinging special delivery letter that evening. The following morning, he called Margaret in Independence and said, "It's a very angry letter and I've decided I don't want her to see it. Burn it." Margaret later wrote:

I did as I was told. Postmaster Hinde naturally made no objection. He handed me the letter, which had just arrived. I took it home and burned it in the backyard incinerator. I felt terribly guilty. I had made such a fuss as a teenager about Mother's tendency to read my mail. If Mother had ever looked out the window and asked me what I was doing, I would have had hysterics.¹⁶

The "incinerator" was most likely away from the three houses in the direction of the barn/carriage house. (One aerial photograph places it north of the structure, in the small grassy area adjacent to the alley access driveway). Independence incinerators consisted of large wire mesh or solid metal (usually rusting) barrels where household and landscape refuse were burned. When environmental concerns prompted the banning of open burning within city limits in the late 1960s, these city-provided residential trash barrels were removed.

During the early years of the Truman presidency, local citizens eagerly volunteered to perform chores in the yard. Eight members of the Independence Chamber of Commerce came to shovel snow on December 19, 1945. Likewise, three residents arrived on March 21, 1946, to rake and collect leaves in the yard.¹⁷ While

¹⁵ Charles Nutter, "The First Lady Is Determined To Avoid The Limelight," Kansas City Star (19 August 1945), file-HST Mrs. 1937-45 No. 2, Kansas City Star Library.

¹⁶ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 28-81.

¹⁷ Photograph of eight members of the Independence Chamber of Commerce shoveling snow at 219 North Delaware Street, 19 December 1945, and "Grooming the 'First Lawn,'" Fred Badami, Floyd Whitten, and Henry Stout raking leaves at 219 North Delaware Street, 21 March 1946, Kansas City Star, Photographic Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

appreciative of the efforts of these civic minded people, the family discouraged these events which usually received mention by the ever-vigilant press. The First Lady particularly wanted to keep 219 North Delaware Street out of the limelight.

As Bess Truman had inherited her mother's love of growing things,¹⁸ so, too, did daughter Margaret who devoted time absent from the 1948 campaign trail to gardening and painting the kitchen pantry. The effort, designed to help her lose weight, became a frequent topic in letters to her father. In late July, Margaret commented, "I have weeded and transplanted in my garden 'til I'm exhausted."¹⁹ The effort bore fruit, for in late August she noted, "My zinnias are way up and the marigolds and bachelor's buttons have bloomed."²⁰ Harry Truman remarked:

You seem to have been slaving away at your paint job and your garden. I am hoping to see an excellent result in each instance. I shall expect to be able to pick a nice bouquet from the garden when I come home Sunday and I shall hope to be able to see myself in those slick pantry walls!"²¹

The flower garden in question was one of the beds which paralleled the west side of the driveway.

Approximately 200 people gathered in front of the Truman home the night of the 1948 election. Many journalists were present to witness Truman's widely-predicted defeat by Republican challenger Thomas E. Dewey. The crowd was convinced Harry Truman was inside the house and surged onto the leaf-strewn front lawn chanting "We Want Harry!" At the request of the frantic Secret Service, Margaret Truman came onto the front porch to tell the disbelieving throng that her father was not home. President Truman had slipped out earlier that afternoon from the kitchen, through the southeast

¹⁸ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, p. 17.

¹⁹ Margaret Truman, Letters From Father: The Truman Family's Personal Correspondence (New York: Arbor House, 1981), p. 150. The letter was postmarked 25 July 1948.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 151. The letter was postmarked 22 August 1948.

²¹ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, p. 17.

yard to the alley, across his neighbors' lawns, and into a waiting car on Maple Avenue. He spent a peaceful night thirty miles away.²²

On January 20, 1949, the day Harry S Truman was inaugurated for his first full term, Van Horn Road in Independence and its Kansas City extension, 15th Street, were renamed "Truman Road." Although publicly grateful, the family's private response to the redesignation was one of regret.²³

The trappings--and risks--of the presidency intruded at 219 North Delaware Street yet again during 1949. The souvenir-seeking, curious public grew ever bolder, much to the dismay of Secret Service agents. One Independence resident remarked that the tourists "got to pulling weather boarding off and everything.... Why they'd pull the leaves off the trees and just [do] anything for a souvenir from the Truman home. They were tearing it up."²⁴ According to Margaret Truman, it was former President Herbert C. Hoover who finally convinced President Truman to fence the public out:

"May I give you a word of advice?" Mr. Hoover said that. He said, "Is your house in Independence well protected?" And Dad said, "Well, there are two or three Secret Service men out there." He [Hoover] said, "No, no... how about the yard?" And Dad said "No." And he [Hoover] said, "May I insist that you put up a fence before the American public walks off with your house?.... They did with mine in Palo Alto. They walked up to it and cut hunks out of it with a penknife until I put a fence around it."²⁵

²² "Sing At Truman Home," Kansas City Times (3 November 1948), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1948 No. 2 Kansas City Star Library, Kansas City, Missouri; and Sue Gentry, interview, 22 June 1983, Independence, Missouri.

²³ The Truman Road Story, sponsored by Women's Truman Democratic Club of Missouri, Inc. (Kansas City, Kansas: Lane Printing Company, 1952), p. 6, folder-Jackson County History, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library; and Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman, p. 41.

²⁴ Henry P. Chiles, Oral History Interview, Independence, Missouri, 1 November 1961 and 14 August 1962, by J. R. Fuchs, Harry S. Truman Library, p. 57.

²⁵ Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman, p. 33.

Work began on the fence in mid-October 1949, and was completed by late November at a cost of \$5,400.²⁶ The five-foot high fence enclosed the property on its three most vulnerable sides. The board and wire fence which formally delineated the yard from the alley, if indeed it still stood, would have been removed at this time. The east was left open to allow easy access to the two Wallace properties, thus preserving the family compound or "Wallaceville" as Margaret Truman called it. While a large, double gate permitted automobile access from Truman Road, an opening was left between the barn and Wallace garage leading to the alley. The fence had four pedestrian gates: the front gate, one by the southwest corner of the carriage house, one opening directly into George and May Wallace's west side yard, and one abutting the same house on its west side. Vegetation was not to be removed. No trees or shrubs were sacrificed for what was essentially an unwelcome intrusion. Where the fenceline bisected with protruding tree roots, the fence remained on course with the bottom of the fence section molded to accommodate the vegetation.

One final alteration to the landscape during the presidency occurred in the spring of 1950 when Bess Truman arranged to have the rear south porch screened in and extended six feet to the east on brick tiers. The porch was a favorite spot "where the family whiled away more than one summer afternoon or evening, secure from prying eyes." (See Appendix A, Figure 15). It was also responsible for Harry Truman's inspiration to build what became known as the "Truman Balcony" at the White House.²⁷ It was on this beloved back porch where Harry Truman relaxed with his family the evening he learned of the invasion of South Korea on June 24, 1950.²⁸ The work necessitated the removal of the short concrete sidewalk leading north to the pergola. The area beneath the extended porch received a red brick floor. The work was performed by carpenter William E. "Bill" Gragg.²⁹

While yard work may have been performed by Harrison Irving in 1945 and 1946, another black yard man worked at the Summer White House from 1947 to 1950. His name was Menefee Moses. His

²⁶ "Expenditure of Federal Funds In Support of Presidential Properties," Fifteenth Report by the Committee on Government Operations, 20 May 1974, Union Calendar No. 490, 93d Congress, 2d Session, House report No. 93-1052, p. 51, folder-Presidential Properties, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library.

²⁷ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, pp. 314-15.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 356.

²⁹ Robert Sanders, interview, 30 June 1983, Independence, Missouri; and Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman, p. 35.

employment can be validated by the numerous checks written by the Trumans and sent to Independence from Washington. The number of checks and their frequency during the growing season indicate Menefee Moses was the yard man. In 1950, however, checks were written directly to the four Wallaces, occupants of the homes on Truman Road, to pay for Moses's work. By 1951, mention of Menefee Moses is no longer made in available financial records. Two listings for trimming trees, on November 2 and December 16, 1952, for \$28.58 and \$25 respectively, do exist.³⁰

As late as 1950, the tall flower gardens on the west side of the driveway continued to be planted and cultivated.³¹

Photographs from the last years of the Truman Presidency prompt some comments on the Summer White House's landscape. "No Parking" signs (a twelve-inch circular sign fastened to four-foot high wooden posts) graced the narrow turf between the sidewalk and curb along North Delaware Street. The first was immediately west of the flagpole while the second stood just to the north of the alley entranceway. The spirea was irregularly shaped along the west and north facade ranging from four to seven feet in height. One particularly large bush was just west of the back porch stairway on the north side of the house. It stretched to rooftop level of the screened-in porch, thus further shielding this private area. Trees were of varying ages with the oldest and tallest in the southwest [one] and northwest corners [two] and the middle of the north side yard. The two trees surrounding the pergola were also extant.³²

Similarly, in the east back yard, the spirea grew nearly unchecked in the "L" area surrounding the large shingle oak tree. The two large bushes, possibly lilac, twenty feet directly to the east of the back porch, also reached high in the air to shroud this screened-in porch. Another bush of this height and variety stands

³⁰ Chronological List, "House Repairs, Etc.," Papers of the President of the United States, 1945-1953, President's Secretary's Files, folder-Personal Statements, Financial--Bills, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³¹ Photograph of Marian Wallace and a friend (daughter of Rev. H. M. Hunt) standing in the northeast yard of 219 North Delaware Street, looking north, circa 1950, number 86-206-8 (from the papers of Margaret Truman Daniel), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³² Ibid., photograph of the front, west facade of 219 North Delaware Street looking southeast, circa 1949, number 62-382 (from the Kansas City Star), and 2 May 1950, number 67-388 (Albert Schoenberg, "From Album Containing Photographs of Improvements Around the Independence Missouri Square").

to the south of the walkway/driveway intersection. Lawn furniture in the form of a metal table with a center umbrella cover and numerous chairs littered the yard in this area near the barn. The walkway leading to the south kitchen entrance remained a series of paving stones, not concrete.³³

This was the setting for the return of Harry and Bess Truman for their retirement in January 1953. (See Appendix A, Figure 16).

³³ Ibid., photograph of the east, back yard of 219 North Delaware Street looking northeast, circa 1951, number 67-4616.

CHAPTER FIVE

Home Again at 219 North Delaware Street, 1953-1972

On January 20, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower took the oath of office and Harry and Bess Truman returned to 219 North Delaware Street to retire from public office. The Trumans anticipated resuming "normal" lives as private citizens. The happy homecoming on January 22 was tempered with sadness in that their retirement would not include Madge Gates Wallace, who died quietly in the White House on December 5, 1952.¹

Although Madge Wallace did not make out a will, there was never any question that Harry and Bess would continue living in the "Big House," the only permanent home they had ever known. The Trumans agreed to pay Bess' three brothers their equal quarter-shares to the home which was valued at \$25,000.² Two nineteen North Delaware Street was placed under the joint ownership of Harry and Bess in order to ensure the immediate transfer to the surviving spouse.³

One of the priorities for Bess Truman to accomplish was removing the intrusive picket fence which encircled the property. She wanted to get rid of this vivid symbol of the presidency and the Secret Service. Margaret Truman later noted:

The Trumans were not in residence very long before she saw that this was not a good idea. At least 5,000 people a week walked or drove past the

¹ "Mrs. Wallace Is Dead," Kansas City Star (5 December 1952), p. 1, White House Scrapbooks, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

² Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, interview, 14 June 1983, Independence, Missouri; and Ron Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Mrs. Margaret Truman Daniel at the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri, November 17, 1983 (Omaha: National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 1983), p. 42.

³ Missouri Warranty Deed, Frank G. and Natalie O. Wallace to Harry S and Elizabeth (Bess) Truman, 25 July 1953, Land Book 1034, Page 631, No. 609418, Office of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence, Missouri; and Col. Rufus Burrus, interview, 22 July 1983, Independence, Missouri.

house. The fence was the main protection from souvenir hunters, who would have stolen every flower in the gardens and pried every clapboard off the first floor.⁴

The Trumans tried to settle into a typical Independence lifestyle, but this proved to be an impossibility. The public adulation never abated; it was a fact with which the Trumans lived and which intensified their own need for privacy. Even at home, the constant stream of tourists passing the house of the former president impaired leisure activities in the yard. In the summer of 1954, for example, Bess Truman set up the garden umbrella, table and chairs in the back yard (probably near the barn in the southeast yard). One afternoon the former First Lady sat there to read, but so many tourists gathered at the fence to stare at her that she quickly retreated into the house.⁵

Harry Truman, more accustomed to the attention given a President, continued many of the activities he had enjoyed while in office. When Truman woke in the morning, he policed the grounds for litter, and then, before breakfast, took his morning walk.⁶ He would often be met by a reporter who would accompany him around the neighborhood. Truman had no use for "litter bugs." He wrote:

They throw beer cans, pop bottles, lipstick wrappers and anything else for the trash can into my front yard; from [the] sidewalk and the street in front.

As an early riser I pick up the trash and take a walk with most unkind thoughts of the litter bug public.⁷

One of Harry Truman's favorite hobbies was checking the thermometers and barometers which were placed at various spots

⁴ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), p. 397.

⁵ Helen Worden Erskine, "Truman In Retirement," Collier's (4 February 1955), p. 21, folder-Truman, Harry S Jan.-March 1955, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library.

⁶ Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, interview, 14 June 1983, Independence, Missouri.

⁷ Robert H. Ferrell, ed., Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 395.

inside and outside the house. While there is a weather gauge on the front porch near the front door [broken during the winter of 1984, only the bracket remains] and on the back porch next to the east kitchen door, it is not known if any gauges were present in the yard. He enjoyed monitoring the weather gauges each day. He had an uncanny ability to predict weather conditions more accurately than professional meteorologists with more sophisticated means at their disposal. The crude gauges and the shape, density, and color of the clouds were all that he needed. Harry Truman also delighted in observing the wide range of animals which lived in the neighborhood and played in the yard. Birds, squirrels, and rabbits were among the former President's favorite creatures to watch from the back porch.⁸ Before leaving for San Francisco in 1955 to attend ceremonies commemorating the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Charter, Harry Truman wrote in his diary:

Bess was at the window waving goodbye to me, the old yard rabbit was looking at me as were two neighborhood cats--a black one and a yellow one from under the spirea bushes at the back door. Pigeons, jay birds, robins, a thrush, and a catbird were on hand for a drink and a flutter in the birdbath.⁹

In July 1955, the Trumans were excited and entertained to have some redbirds build a nest adjacent to their back porch. The former President recorded the event in two installments in his diary. On July 24, Harry Truman wrote:

A couple of red birds [sic] decided to build a nest on the back porch. Grape vines and rose bushes climb over the south exposure and there is an ideal place for a nest. A few days after the nest was finished four beautiful speckled eggs appeared. And in due time four little naked birds came to life. In a few days these four little birds were able to make hungry noises and the mama and papa birds were busy all day and late in the

⁸ Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman. While not recorded in the transcript, the information comes from a post-interview conversation with Margaret Truman Daniel in the main hallway of 219 North Delaware Street.

⁹ Robert H. Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), p. 240.

evening furnishing food to four apparently insatiable appetites.¹⁰

On July 31, he recorded the sad fate of the young redbirds:

The four little birds finally opened their eyes and began to have feathers appear. We watched them grow and wanted to see them fly away at the proper time. The old birds became very tame. We could walk right up to the nest and they would keep right on taking care of their children.

Our next door neighbors on the south across the alley have a great big black cat. He used our yard to walk around and cool off. He would have nothing to do with us individually, except that he'd allow my brother-in-law George [Wallace] to pet him.

One evening we saw him start up the back steps to the porch where the red birds had their nest with the four little birds. We ran him off but the next morning we heard the mama & papa birds making a great fuss about five o'clock. When we arrived at the porch about 5:15 the nest was upside down and the four little red birds were inside the big black cat. Too bad the cat couldn't have been caught in the act. It would have been too bad for him.¹¹

Harry Truman also had responsibilities around the house. Because retired presidents were given no pensions at that time and he refused to capitalize on his former position, the Trumans continued their modest lifestyle and Midwestern thrift. This economizing extended to cutting the grass at 219 North Delaware Street, a task which the yard man--not Harry Truman--always performed. Bess Truman tried to coax her husband into mowing the lawn, knowing he did not like this job. Margaret Truman later recalled: "Dad just smiled and said he would get around to it as soon as possible. The grass continued to grow. Mother began wondering aloud what the neighbors thought of the lawn. If the grass got any higher, it would look as if Harry Truman had gone

¹⁰ Robert H. Ferrell, ed., Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 321.

¹¹ Ibid.

back to farming and was raising a wheat crop in the front yard."¹² Harry Truman later wrote:

There was one chore she did ask me to do, which I wanted to get out of doing. That was to mow the lawn. I think she did this mainly to tease me a little. She takes great pride in the yard and puts in many hours tending the rose garden. We do call in outside help to tend to the grounds and trees and cutting the grass. But one weekend Mrs. Truman said that I had done nothing about the lawn. So I waited till Sunday morning, just as our neighbors were beginning to pass on their way to church, and I took out the lawn mower and started to cut the grass. Mrs. Truman, preparing to leave for church, was horrified to see me cutting the lawn.

"What are you doing on Sunday?" she asked.

"I'm doing what you asked me to do," I replied.

Meanwhile the neighbors continued to pass by the house. Their glances were not lost on Mrs. Truman. She never asked me to mow the lawn again.¹³

Truman himself noted that his wife "takes great pride in the yard and puts in many hours tending the rose garden."¹⁴ Mrs. Truman's level of activity was hampered, however, by painful, persistent arthritis in her hands. During this time she confided to a friend, "[I] am somewhat handicapped in doing things with my hands."¹⁵

With Menefee Moses no longer available, another yard man was hired to care for the landscape. A local black minister, the Reverend Edward L. Hobby, supplemented his income by caring for the Truman shrubbery, trees, and grass.

¹² Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, p. 398.

¹³ Harry S. Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York: Popular Library, 1953), p. 56.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Margaret Truman, Bess W. Truman, p. 399. This letter to Mary Paxton Keeley was written in March 1953.

A number of photographs detail the state of the Truman landscape during the early to mid-1950s. Spirea continued to flourish along the front of the house, sending long shoots running over walkways and porches.¹⁶ The spirea, lilac, and mock orange did equally well on the east and north yards. The large trees surrounding the pergola continued to dominate the northeast side yard and a young sapling grew along the west side of the driveway near the Truman Road gate.¹⁷ (See Appendix A, Figure 17).

The screened back porch provided many hours of enjoyment as a place for the former President to read and Bess Truman to host her Tuesday Bridge Club. Meals were also eaten here in warm weather. The porch, with its own natural screening, allowed the Trumans to enjoy the beauty of their yard without venturing out into it and risk the unwelcome stares of tourists. The north side of the porch was nearly obscured from Truman Road by large spirea and mock orange bushes. A portion of the south side was dominated by the prodigious grapevine while the east end remained relatively open to the driveway area and the Wallace yards beyond. The abandoned Secret Service security booth stood empty with a twenty-five-foot tree growing precariously between the booth and the barn. No other vegetation appeared on the west side of the barn or on any side of the Secret Service security booth.¹⁸ (See Appendix A, Figure 18).

Unless Mrs. Truman issued special instructions, Reverend Hobby generally had free reign of the grounds and made his own decisions as to what needed to be done. Most of the Truman's employees worked with little or no supervision. Hobby's schedule varied, but in summertime when there was more to do in the yard, he worked two to three days a week at the Truman home. Some of this time

¹⁶ Photograph of Harry and Bess Truman standing on the front porch of 219 North Delaware Street, circa summer 1953, number 66-3703 (from the album Mr. Citizen; photographer Bradley Smith), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library.

¹⁷ Ibid., photograph of Harry S Truman stepping outside the Truman Road gate to begin a morning walk, looking southwest, 1 February 1953, number 65-839, (St. Louis Post-Dispatch).

¹⁸ Ibid., photograph of Harry Truman sitting on the back porch of 219 North Delaware Street reading newspapers, circa summer 1953, number 66-3706 (from the album Mr. Citizen/photographer Bradley Smith); photograph of Mary Shaw Branton standing in front of the Secret Service security booth, looking southeast, May 1954, number 87-1; photograph of the rear porch area of 219 North Delaware Street, looking north, May 1954, number 86-133-2 (from the papers of Margaret Truman Daniel); and photograph of the rear, east facade of 219 North Delaware Street, looking west, May 1954, number 86-133-1 (from the papers of Margaret Truman Daniel).

included handyman duties inside the house. Landscaping tools were already available at the home. If any implement was needed, Hobby went to a local hardware store, purchased it, and then sent Mrs. Truman the bill.

Hobby operated a manual push lawn mower to cut the grass and he used fertilizer and grass seed on a regular basis. He also trimmed all the shrubs. He maintained them in an overgrown state particularly in the back yard around the screened porch. Hobby stated that when the Trumans sat on the porch, "they could see [the yard], because we kept it trimmed just enough to give them privacy." Shrubs near the basement windows were trimmed so that the ladies doing the laundry could see out into the yard. Occasionally, one or both of the Trumans came out into the yard while Hobby worked. This sometimes drew a crowd at the fence and Hobby would automatically appeal to the onlookers not to take any pictures in respect of the Truman's privacy. Hobby sometimes could be coaxed into taking autograph books inside the house for the Trumans to sign.

Hobby also shoveled snow from the main sidewalks in front and back. For the large driveway area, someone with heavy motorized equipment was hired to clear the snow away.¹⁹

On May 27, 1955, television cameras invaded the Truman home for the first time when Margaret Truman served as guest hostess for Edward R. Murrow's popular show "Person to Person." The "live" telecast saw Margaret interviewing her parents at home from a New York studio. Some of the conversation drifted to the yard:

Margaret Truman: What about the time someone picked your tulips?

Bess Truman: Oh. Well, yes, some woman came in the back yard and started picking all my beautiful white tulips and one of the men on the place went down there and asked her just what she thought she was doing and she said she didn't think Mrs. Truman cared if she took some of her tulips. She took all she wanted.

Margaret Truman: Fine thing, after all the work you did.

Bess Truman: Yes, isn't it?....

Margaret Truman: Mother,... How does your garden grow?

¹⁹ Reverend Edward L. Hobby, interview with Pamela Smoot, 2 July 1985, Independence, Missouri.

Bess Truman: Oh, we have had some wonderful rains and the garden is all in bloom, especially Mrs. Lasker's Peace roses. They're gorgeous.

Margaret Truman: Daddy?.... I am frequently asked what kind of work--manual work, that is--you do around the house.

Harry Truman: I do an immense amount of it from a rocking chair.

Margaret Truman: How many times have you mowed the lawn in the past few years?

Harry Truman: As I remember, I think about once.

Margaret Truman: Un, huh. That right, Mother?

Bess Truman: I don't remember the once.²⁰

April 21, 1956, saw the marriage of Margaret Truman to E. Clifton Daniel, Jr. The event marked the family's third generation to have a wedding reception at 219 North Delaware Street. A view of the proud father escorting the bride from the home revealed the condition of the front lawn. The greening springtime turf sharply contrasted with large areas of brown, lifeless patches killed during the winter.²¹ Another photograph taken from the Truman Road driveway gate highlights the east, back yard as preparations for the wedding reception were underway. The two Wallace couples and Harry Truman organized the lawn furniture on the lawn near the barn. The Secret Service security booth was not visible because of the twelve-foot high shrubbery along the driveway between the barn and the sidewalk. A very large tree, previously identified as a hickory, stood at the extreme northwest corner of the barn. The driveway remained unpaved with an

²⁰ Transcript of 27 May 1955 "Person to Person" broadcast interview with Margaret Truman in New York and Harry and Bess Truman at 219 North Delaware Street: from Margaret Truman, Souvenir: Margaret Truman's Own Story (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), appendix.

²¹ Photograph of Harry and Margaret Truman leaving 219 North Delaware Street to go to Trinity Episcopal Church, 21 April 1956, number 82-21-1 (from the papers of Margaret Truman Daniel), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library; and "Day For Remembering," Kansas City Star (21 April 1956), file-HST Walks, Kansas City Star Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

irregular edge and vegetation growing amidst the gravel and dirt.²² (See Appendix A, Figure 19).

A component of the Truman's "modernization program" in the 1950s, when facilities in the Big House were updated, involved the driveway. Harry Truman wanted to have the gravel driveway leading to the barn paved. In 1956, he solicited two estimates for the job. One contractor, Charles E. Anderson, was already conducting extensive interior repairs and additions. Anderson wanted to remove the base rock from the driveway and alley, and then lay four inches of concrete, using steel mesh for reinforcement. The driveway would be slanted to divert water away from the two Wallace homes, and have eight-inch concrete edging.

While an ideal proposal, the cost estimate of \$4,000 was prohibitive. Truman hired another local contractor who provided a substantially lower estimate. This company placed a concrete square in front of the barn, and after grading over the drive, paved it with two inches of asphalt. Any bricks that had lined the gravel drive were removed at this time. The driveway has had to be redone several times because of the substandard rock bed.²³

Construction for the driveway project was also the most likely time when the flagstones leading from the rear porch walkway to the driveway were removed. In their place, a concrete sidewalk was installed to provide a continuous concrete path from the driveway to the south side kitchen door.

The gas yard lamp, north of the front walkway about ten feet from the front gate, was installed at no charge on June 24, 1964, by the Independence Gas Service Company. The light, a gift from a company in Littleton, Pennsylvania, was made of cast aluminum and is accented by solid brass. It received its name, "Gettysburg," because it was installed in historic downtown Gettysburg, and resembles the nineteenth century handcrafted fixtures of the Northeast. The lamp stands approximately six feet tall in a concrete base. It was Bess Truman's decision to have the light installed. A popular fad in Independence in the early 1960s, May Wallace had already had a similar gas light installed on her front

²² Photograph of the Wallace/Truman family making preparations for Margaret's wedding reception on the southeast lawn of 219 North Delaware Street, 21 April 1956, number 67-4723 (Paul Renshaw photographer), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

²³ Charles E. Anderson, interview at 219 North Delaware Street, 20 June 1983; Free Estimate, Braden and Evans, Concrete Contracting, Kansas City, Missouri, for Charles E. Anderson, 21 April 1956, personal papers of C. E. Anderson, Holden, Missouri; and Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman, p. 25.

lawn. Worried about finances, Mrs. Truman was dismayed when she realized she would have to pay more each month on her gas bill. The light nonetheless illuminated the immediate area and provided an added "safety precaution."²⁴

The Trumans accomplished few additional "modernization" changes to the landscape at 219 North Delaware Street. They were content with the trees, unruly shrubbery, and flower garden areas. Like the old home itself, the landscape represented a link to the family's past. No drastic alterations were ever contemplated to erase that heritage. This strong preservation ethic of Harry and Bess Truman explains why their home's landscape under their stewardship retained the characteristics inherent in the early twentieth century.²⁵ (See Chapter One).

In 1962, Robert Sanders and his son, Jerry, removed the security booth that had been next to the north side of the barn since 1945. This was accomplished much to the joy of Bess Truman who detested the small structure.²⁶ In December 1965, Public Law 89-186 extended Secret Service protection for former presidents, their widows, and dependents. When the Secret Service returned to Independence, agents asked to erect another security booth on the same spot as the previous one. Bess Truman, who flatly refused permission, was determined to keep the agents away from the house and from invading the couple's privacy.²⁷ Harry Truman did, however, permit the installation of a simple surveillance system, "provided there were no modifications of a substantial nature to either the residence or surrounding property."²⁸ Some security

²⁴ Mrs. H. H. (Ardis) Haukenberry, interview, 14 June 1983, Independence, Missouri; Mrs. Elizabeth Safly, Librarian, Harry S. Truman Library, telephone conversation with author, 11 July 1983; Lew Waltz, Hadco (Division of Craftlite, Inc.) to Randall J. Pope, Acting Regional Director, National Park Service, Midwest Region, letter, 30 September 1983; Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman, pp. 46-7; and Robert Sanders, interview, 30 June 1983, Independence, Missouri.

²⁵ Analysis of author based on accumulated historical research dedicated to the Truman home and family.

²⁶ Robert Sanders, interview, 30 June 1983, Independence, Missouri.

²⁷ Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman, p. 53.

²⁸ "Expenditure of Federal Funds In Support of Presidential Properties," Fifteenth Report by the Committee on Government Operations, 20 May 1974, Union Calendar No. 490, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session, House Report No. 93--1052, p. 51, folder-Presidential

cameras were installed and support wiring often followed the steel picket fence. Care had to be taken when trimming weeds along the fence not to cut the security wires.²⁹

With Secret Service agents at the Truman Library providing the former president protection during working hours, the "Truman Protective Division" came into existence in February 1966. By 1967, the Secret Service received permission to use the west side of the barn/carriage house.³⁰

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Harry Truman's health had deteriorated and he was largely confined to his home. Mrs. Truman's time and energy were devoted to caring for her husband and operating the household. In all likelihood, attention to the care of the grounds was not a high priority. Mrs. Truman, an innate spendthrift, determined to save time and money in 1969 by replacing the slate roof with asphalt shingles. The roof was beyond repair because of a severe winter ice storm and an equally severe July hailstorm.³¹ It is possible that this severe 1969 weather claimed the pergola which was definitely removed before December 1970.

With the beloved rose garden element gone and only its brick foundation remaining, the natural screening for the back porch was diminished. Therefore, the mock orange and other shrubs growing around the pergola's perimeter were allowed to become as overgrown as the other vegetation in this area.³² (Appendix A, Figure 23).

The familiar and much photographed North Delaware Street front facade changed very little from past decades. Spirea at the colored glass-flanked bay window was carefully trimmed to permit visibility out of the first floor living room window. Levels at which the spirea were trimmed varied significantly. While bushes at both the north and south ends were maintained at just a foot

Properties, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library.

²⁹ Robert Sanders, interview, 30 June 1983, Independence, Missouri.

³⁰ "Truman Protective Division," The Service Star, U.S. Secret Service, Department of the Treasury (Sept.-Oct. 1971), p. 12; and Ray Zumwalt, U.S. Secret Service, interview, 11 August 1983, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

³¹ Tom Manson, President, Western Roofing Company, Kansas City, Missouri, telephone conversation, 28 June 1983.

³² Photograph to the east, back yard of 219 North Delaware Street, looking northwest, 1 December 1970, number 71-860 (taken by the Truman Library), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library.

above the porch railings, the spirea flanking the front entrance stood higher, both above six feet. Both sidewalks leading to the front entrance and around the south side of the house had cracked in several places, but there was no attempt to patch the fissures. No weeds or grass, however, were allowed to grow in these areas.³³ (Appendix A, Figure 21).

In December 1970, both large elm trees on the west and east ends of the former pergola stood. Both trees, however, appeared to be unhealthy as many branches were missing, giving each uneven shapes. The tree to the west leaned precariously over the rear, two-story kitchen wing. The birdbath stood in the middle of the brick foundation of the pergola which was surrounded by eight-to-nine-foot tall bushes. The sundial pedestal stood by itself in the northeast yard, aligned with the birdbath. Centered several feet off the screened back porch was a small bush which stood three feet tall. Along the sidewalk skirting the south side rear porch a few small shrubs grew below the grapevine. The shrubs most likely were remnants of the climbing rose vines which were mentioned by President Truman in the 1950s.³⁴ (Appendix A, Figure 22).

A visitor to the home at this time remarked that the grapevines grew along the south side of the porch and did not extend to the east facade. To the north, along Truman Road, the shrubbery flourished considerably above the top of the fence, thus providing a solid wall of screening along this busy thoroughfare.³⁵

³³ Ibid., photograph of the Trumans and Nixons leaving the front entrance of 219 North Delaware Street, 21 March 1969, number 72-3838 (from Jack Nesbitt, the White House); Humbert Humphrey leaving the front entrance of 219 North Delaware Street, circa 1967, number 68-377 (from the Kansas City Star, J. W. Porter); southwest view of 219 North Delaware Street, looking northeast, number 72-406 (Joseph Cavaleri); and front view of 219 North Delaware Street, 1 December 1970, number 71-857 (taken by the Truman Library).

³⁴ Ibid., photograph of the south yard of 219 North Delaware Street, looking north, 1 December 1970, number 71-859 and photograph of the east yard of 219 North Delaware Street, looking west, 1 December 1970, number 71-860 (both taken by the Truman Library).

³⁵ Conversation with Liz Safly, Librarian, Harry S. Truman Library, 29 October 1986, Independence, Missouri. See also photograph of the east yard of 219 North Delaware Street looking west, 1 December 1970, number 71-860 (both taken by the Truman Library), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library.

An early 1970s photograph reveals that screening for increased privacy was also present along the south alley fence. Looking from the yards to the south toward the Truman home, the picket fence was nearly invisible and the first floor of the home was largely obscured. The long line of bushes along the fence acted as a visual barrier on this south side of the property. Weeds grew along the south and east walls of the carriage house and shrubs two to three feet high grew at the northeast corner. The large hickory which stood at the northwest corner of the carriage house was no longer there.

The small rose garden stood to the north of the intersection of the sidewalk and driveway. The plantings were arranged in a 4-3-4 pattern on a north-south axis.³⁶ (See Appendix A, Figure 24).

During the post-presidential period, Thomas (T. B.) Saulter continued his trimming, spraying, and fertilizing services. It was not unusual for Saulter and his crew to spend two to three days at 219 North Delaware Street repairing the damage to trees and shrubs in the aftermath of icestorms. Because they were good friends, Harry Truman enjoyed sitting outside in good weather and watching the men work. While the former President and Saulter visited, Bess Truman would sometimes emerge from the house to check on her husband and/or issue instructions to the workers. While his thrifty wife was not present, Harry Truman would usually tip the men five dollars apiece and send yardman Rev. Edward Hobby into the house to get soft drinks for the workers. Although Truman wanted to give the men a beer, especially during the hot summertime, Saulter vetoed the gesture because of insurance considerations.

Saulter observed that Bess Truman relished tending her rose garden. She maintained it very well by herself. The former first lady, while in charge of her home's care, trusted the professional judgement of the people she employed. Mrs. Truman did not interfere by issuing excessive instructions or by constant supervision. Only for one particular tree did Bess Truman repeatedly insist that Saulter treat with special care. According to Saulter, the silver maple which stands near the Truman Road gate was Mrs. Truman's favorite because it was the home of honeybees. She refused to allow Saulter to disturb the tree in any way until cold weather when the honeybees were dormant.

Saulter's men regularly fertilized the Truman's lawn, but did not spray for weeds. They used Phillips 66 nitrogen fertilizer which dissolved in water and was applied by a spray tank. The Trumans paid \$185 each year to have all the trees in their yard

³⁶ Photographs of the barn/carriage house area at 219 North Delaware Street, looking south and north, 27 September 1971, numbers 72-3195a and 72-3195b (taken by the Truman Library), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library.

sprayed in February or March for insect infestation and other diseases. Checks normally followed the work within ten days and were signed by both Harry and Bess Truman.³⁷

On December 26, 1972, one month short of twenty years of "retired" life, former President Harry S Truman died. With a military honor guard stationed along the sidewalk beyond the picket fence, the U.S. flag flew at half-staff. A thin, sickly tree stood just to the southwest of the flag pole. The spirea along the front, west facade appeared much the same, except that the bush to the immediate north of the front door was clearly predominant, reaching only several feet shy of the porch roof overhang. Farther to the east, the two trees which once surrounded the former pergola were gone, removed within the previous two years.³⁸

³⁷ Thomas (T. B.) Saulter, interview with Pamela Smoot, 12 December 1985, Raytown, Missouri.

³⁸ Color photograph of the military honor guard stationed in front of 219 North Delaware Street, looking southeast, 27 December 1972, number 73-1392 (from the Kansas City Star), Photographic Archives, Harry S. Truman Library.

CHAPTER SIX

Bess Truman Alone at 219 North Delaware Street, 1972-1982

Following her husband's death in late 1972, Bess Truman lived alone in the house at 219 North Delaware Street. Her closest relative was May Wallace who also lived alone in her small house next door at 605 West Truman Road since her husband's death in 1963. The two women provided each other with companionship as they both continued to maintain their comfortable and familiar surroundings which evoked such loving memories of the past. Dramatic changes to their homes or the landscape did not occur.

Change did occur at 601 West Truman Road, the residence of Frank and Natalie Wallace, who both died in 1960. The home had been used as a rental property. In the early 1970s, when the former President required close medical supervision, medical corpsmen stayed there because it provided immediate accessibility to the Big House. Following Harry Truman's death, both Mrs. Truman and Mrs. Wallace decided to sell the small home and it was put up for sale. Doris Hecker intended to buy the property and was disappointed when she learned of the termination of the sale. Hecker eagerly accepted a proposal from a Secret Service agent who called to ask if she would be interested in renting the house. Hecker moved into the house in February 1973.

Doris Hecker was initially concerned about health and safety risks inherent in her back yard. Fenced with chain link on all three sides (erected sometime in the 1960s), the yard was overgrown with honeysuckle bushes which attracted droves of bees and provided ideal nesting sites for birds. The honeysuckle vines, which produced yellow and white blooms, literally choked all three sides of the yard making it a secluded area away from the main family compound. There were also mock orange and purple and white lilac bushes. The vegetation climbed to a height of twelve feet and grew four to five feet out from the fence. The "jungle" was so overgrown, Hecker was afraid to step out into the yard.

Doris Hecker learned from her new landlords that the area was landscaped in this manner to provide privacy "in the old days." Frank Wallace particularly enjoyed taking naps on a cot in this area. The yard may also have been used as a family picnic area. Citing her fear of the bees and the lack of air circulation to the non-air-conditioned house, Hecker asked May Wallace in the spring of 1973 if she could clear all the vegetation out. Mrs. Wallace had no objection, but she asked Mrs. Truman for her permission.

Bess Truman also approved, and said she was "glad to see it cleared out." With the interior fence perimeter thus cleared, the area was resodded with a four-foot strip of sod. In order for Hecker to have her own parking area, a gravel driveway was installed on the east side of the house. An original lilac bush remains near the termination of the driveway. It is one of the few plantings to survive. The spirea was replaced in front of the home after the foundation area was excavated on all sides. Evergreens, infested with bagworms, were not replaced.¹

One Secret Service agent became particularly familiar with the property. Robert "Bob" Lockwood initially began working on the Truman detail in 1967 for a period of fourteen months. He returned in March 1973 as chief of the division where he served until his retirement in March 1982. Lockwood's first impression of the Truman grounds was shaped by the commonness and simpleness of the lawn which reminded him of "old-time America." Lockwood assumed the duties of another Secret Service agent who helped yard man Rev. Hobby. Rev. Hobby was growing older and less able to undertake more strenuous tasks like pushing a lawn mower. Lockwood began mowing the grass once each week. He remembered that the turf had a considerable amount of clover mixed with the grass. For two years in 1979 and 1980, his son, Mike Lockwood, helped on the grounds. Of the lawn, Bob Lockwood commented: "It wasn't manicured. It didn't look like a golf course, and it shouldn't have around the house."² Lockwood also mowed inside the former pergola where the birdbath was centrally positioned.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Rev. Hobby began performing more duties inside the home. These tasks involved general cleaning and small repair work. With Mrs. Truman's fragile and declining health, less attention went to matters outside the house. Rev. Hobby labored on the grounds at least once a week, but duties inside the home had priority. He accomplished those obligations first before going out to work in the yard. It was Rev. Hobby who cared for specific areas which contained the vegetation most important to Bess Truman--primarily the rose garden which she had so meticulously cultivated. In planting new roses, Rev. Hobby tended to "bunch up" the plants, not strictly conforming to the established four by three by four pattern. The roses comprised several different varieties. Tulips from Holland, remnants of those received by Mrs. Truman as a gift, came up freely in the rose garden.

¹ Ms. Doris Hecker, 601 West Truman Road, telephone conversation with author, 13 December 1986, hss, Cultural Resources Management Files, Midwest Regional Office.

² Robert "Bob" Lockwood, interview with Pamela Smoot, 26 June 1985, 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Missouri.

Lockwood took over some of Rev. Hobby's landscaping chores like caring for the other flowers (peonies, daffodils, jonquils, and surprise lilies) and shrubs, although Rev. Hobby always trimmed the bushes, notably the spirea. Lockwood noted: "Usually, the spireas were the height of the railing, but [they] had a tendency to come over the sidewalk and people couldn't walk through." Vegetation along the west side of the barn was also at least six feet high. Lockwood stated that "Hobby trimmed the hedges when he felt well. He was slow, but thorough."³ Rev. Hobby also kept the weeds and grass growing between cracks in the sidewalks and driveway pulled.

Two beds of daffodils which appear west of the driveway predate Lockwood's association with the yard. It was Bess Truman who decided what flowers were to be planted, although no new plantings occurred during this time. Rev. Hobby and Lockwood maintained what was already in place.

Paralleling the Truman Road driveway entrance, red, white, and pink peonies gave way to lilac bushes along the east side fence. Rev. Hobby occasionally cut dead wood out of the lilacs and bundled them up for the garbage collectors to haul away. In this northeast side yard, two clear pathway areas connected both sides of the north lawn.⁴

An icestorm struck the area in early January 1973, causing severe damage to trees. Many limbs fell at 219 North Delaware Street and Hobby had to clean up the debris.⁵ Having succumbed to Dutch elm disease, an elm in the extreme northwest corner and one elm in the north, central yard were removed. The work was performed by Bill's Tree Service during the mid- to late 1970s.⁶

Although no marker was allowed following National Historic Landmark designation of the home and neighborhood in 1972, Mrs. Truman authorized the placement of a U.S. Bicentennial plaque west of the flagpole. Like other signs placed throughout the city of Independence, the one at the Truman home is dark blue aluminum with raised white letters. Purchased by the city for \$350, the plaque was installed in late April 1976. The sign reads:

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Photograph of Edward E. Hobby cleaning up ice storm damage at 219 North Delaware Street, 4 January 1973, Kansas City Star Photographic Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁶ Robert "Bob" Lockwood, interview with Pamela Smoot, 26 June 1985, 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Missouri.

TRUMAN HOUSE

Built about 1867 by George Porterfield Gates, a mill owner. President Harry S. Truman and his wife Bess Wallace Truman, granddaughter of Gates, made this their home from the time of their marriage in 1919. The "Summer White House" from 1945-1953.⁷

Also in 1976, work began on renovation of the sidewalk and curbing in front of the Truman home. The City Council financed the initial \$4,101 to assist in the restoration of the sidewalk. Hexagonal blocks of limestone were relocated from other areas in Independence, and cut limestone curbing was purchased from a limestone company in Topeka, Kansas.⁸

A professional lawn service, Raytown [Missouri] Lawn Mower's "Chem-Lawn" service began administering quarterly fertilizer/insecticide treatments in 1978. The price of more than \$200 annually proved to be too expensive for Mrs. Truman who ordered that the service be discontinued. Raytown Lawn Mower made four applications of weed killer, fertilizer, insecticide, and pre-emergence for controlling foxtail and crab grass, on the lawn between March 28, 1978, and April 17, 1979. Each application cost \$62.50.⁹

In 1980, Bob Lockwood took an old pitchfork from the basement and stuck it in the ground in the southeast yard near the barn. He wanted to protect the protruding water pipe from the former

⁷ "Bicentennial Signs Placed," Examiner (23 April 1976), p. 1B, folder-Truman, Harry S 1976, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library.

⁸ Ibid.; Bob Lynn, "District To Revive Memories: Truman Heritage Gets Emphasis in Independence," Kansas City Star (19 February 1976), p. 4E, folder-Harry S. Truman Heritage District; and "Curb Work," caption of photograph showing city crew replacing curbing and sidewalks, 6 April 1976, Kansas City Star Photographic Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁹ Lewis Mattoon, Raytown Lawn Mower Parts and Service, 6122 Blue Ridge Boulevard, Raytown, Missouri, conversation with Steve Wilson, 31 March 1986, notes of telephone conversation, Cultural Resources Management, Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service; and Robert "Bob" Lockwood, interview with Pamela Smoot, 26 June 1985, 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Missouri.

Secret Service security booth from being severed by the lawn mower's rotary blades.¹⁰

One of Mrs. Truman's nurses, Trudy Johnson, recalled the home's landscape since her employment in 1978. Bushes were kept tall, especially in the screened porch area. Bess Truman enjoyed having Johnson read to her while sitting on the back porch. Johnson does not recall being able to see busy Truman Road from the screened porch. With the grapevine growing wild to the south and the spirea and mock orange dominating the north, the porch was an ideal place from which to view the nesting birds, including cardinals. With Mrs. Truman's hearing and sight failing, nurse Johnson enjoyed describing the birds to the former First Lady. Johnson also read to Mrs Truman in the Gates bedroom where the sound of the overgrown bushes rustling against the window was common.

Johnson also remembered that nothing was done with the peonies until the plant withered in the fall and the yellowing bush was cut to the ground. She commented that the spireas in the Truman yard were unusual in that the old growth was removed from the base after spring growth commenced. Therefore, the spireas were thinned by removing excess and/or old growth at ground-level in the spring and were trimmed in the late fall at the top in preparation for winter.¹¹

The ten years that Bess Truman lived alone at 219 North Delaware Street differed very little from the previous twenty years of retirement as far as the grounds were concerned. The former First Lady controlled the finances and decided what "improvements" were to be made. Only slight changes occurred in large part because Mrs. Truman was comfortable and satisfied with her home and yard. She was also a very frugal lady who did not indulge in extravagant or expensive projects. Bess Truman only sanctioned basic maintenance. Because Rev. Hobby and Bob Lockwood knew her tastes, preferences, and budgetary concerns, their services proved to be ideal.

It was in this setting of comfortable familiarity and love that Bess Wallace Truman quietly passed away in the early morning hours of October 18, 1982. A private family home for 115 years, 219 North Delaware Street was about to become a place for an entire nation to enjoy as a unit of the National Park System.

¹⁰ Robert "Bob" Lockwood, interview with Pamela Smoot, 26 June 1985, 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Missouri.

¹¹ "Record of Communication," telephone conversation between Harry S Truman National Historic Site Museum Curator Steve Harrison and Trudy Johnson, 30 July 1986; and note from Cindy Ott-Jones to Steve Harrison, August 1986, park files.

C H A P T E R S E V E N

National Park Service Stewardship of 219 North Delaware Street

Bess Wallace Truman's death on October 18, 1982, brought about the termination of the Truman Protective Division. Before Secret Service agents vacated their command post across North Delaware Street, they removed security systems both inside and outside the house. Because of security reasons, the extent and location of this equipment is not known.¹

With the end of Secret Service protection of the property, Bess Truman's estate contracted for a private guard service. In the meantime, negotiations to transfer stewardship of the home began. Mrs. Truman's will left the property to the "United States of America to be held and operated by it under the direction of the Archivist of the United States in conjunction with the Harry S. Truman Library."² General Services Administration and Department of the Interior officials met to negotiate a cooperative agreement to award stewardship to the National Park Service.

On December 8, 1982, Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt, acting under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935, declared 219 North Delaware Street the "Harry S Truman National Historic Site." The National Park Service took physical possession of the Truman property on December 12 and the aforementioned cooperative agreement was signed on December 17.

Conditions in 1982 and 1983

One key element missing from the grounds before the Park Service arrived onsite was the sundial element which rested atop the pedestal in the northeast yard. The sundial unexplainably

¹ Ray Zumwault, U.S. Secret Service, interview, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C., 11 August 1983; and Joe Henderson, "Secret Service Ends Vigil at Truman Home," Kansas City Star (1 December 1982), p. 3A, folder-Truman Home--Historic Site, 1982-1983, National Park Service, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

² Last Will and Testament of Bess Wallace Truman, 5 May 1978, park files.

disappeared between the time of Mrs. Truman's death and the advent of Park Service stewardship in early December.³

Charged with the responsibility to preserve 219 North Delaware Street, the National Park Service had to care for the historic landscape as well as the historic structures. In March 1983, Jack E. Boucher of the National Park Service's Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) arrived to photograph existing conditions of the national historic site according to HABS standards. Twenty-one Boucher photographs capture the exterior of the house and carriage house as well as the surrounding landscape. Although taken five months following Bess Truman's death, the HABS photographs comprise a valuable historical record in that for the first time nearly every quadrant at the expansive grounds was photographically captured at the same time. (For the following narrative the reader should refer to Appendix A, Figures 25 to 33).

The Boucher photographs reveal the historically-unruly spirea along the front, west facade was less dense and better trimmed than in the 1960s and 1970s. Trimming levels were just above porch railing levels, although one spirea bush immediately north of the front entrance walkway attained the height of porch eave-level. A window-length gap in the spirea existed at the colored glass lined bay window.⁴

Shrubbery along the south alley fence varied--from level with the fence for the first forty feet from the street to considerably overgrown at the central point in the south yard. The latter included a "thicket" of forsythia which was not shaped or trimmed. The forsythia effectively blocks the view of the rear entrance and parking area of the property at 211 North Delaware Street.⁵

Also on the south side of the house facing the alley, the shrubbery appeared roughly trimmed to porch railing level with one exception. A bush growing in front of the two Gates bedroom windows stretched to a height of six feet. A small, thin evergreen

³ Tom Richter, Chief of Interpretation (formerly Ranger-In-Charge), Harry S Truman National Historic Site, conversation with author at 219 North Delaware Street, 28 October 1986, Independence, Missouri. Photograph HSTR 16:8AB reveals the sundial element from a distance. Photograph by Lester Merrell, Independence Fire Department, ca. late October 1982, park files.

⁴ Photographs of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site by Jack E. Boucher, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, HABS number MP-1175-2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 13, March 1983, Office of the Superintendent, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri.

⁵ Ibid., Boucher, MO-1175-1, 3, and 9.

tree stood between two bushes growing beneath the south Gates bathroom window.⁶ This planting does not appear in any earlier photographs.

The spirea cluster around the large pin oak remained unchanged from earlier (1950s and 1960s) configurations. The shrubbery was maintained at a level height of five feet. Shrubs reached railing-level on the west side of the stairway which leads to the side kitchen door while a bush to the east attained a height of eight to nine feet. Low-lying ground cover occupied the long, narrow flower beds which appear in this area between the sidewalk and the house. A small rose bush, perhaps a remnant of the climbing rose vines from the 1950s, is also in this area. The large grapevine growing up the south side of the rear screened porch wildly flourished up to the rooftop, but appeared to be trained not to spread to the east facade. A ten-foot high bush on the lawn directly across from the southeast corner of this porch sheltered a small evergreen.⁷ Like the evergreen mentioned above, it does not appear in any earlier photograph.

Along the east facade of the screened porch, three irregularly sized shrubs (south to north: four, one, and three feet high respectively) were aligned to mark a grass walkway leading from the sidewalk to the pergola area. The ruins of the pergola, however, were largely obscured by vegetation on the west and east ends. Only the central section was visible where the birdbath pedestal, minus the washing basin which rested nearby on the ground, stood.⁸ The collective height of this jumbled shrubbery reached ten to twelve feet high and provided an effective shroud when viewed from the north. Shrubbery in the northeast yard, particularly those abutting the fence along Truman Road, were also very overgrown. Not only did they stretch high above the top of the fence line, but the shrubbery grew almost unchecked horizontally with spirea, mock orange, and lilac branches reaching beyond the fence perimeter, threatening to impede pedestrian travel along the Truman Road sidewalk.⁹

This "jungle" in the northeast yard gave way to trimmed shrubbery in the north central and northwest lawn areas. Only two shrubs appear along the fence in this area (roughly directly north from the study [Room 109] and parlor/music room [Room 108]) and are

⁶ Ibid., Boucher, MO-1175-5, 8 and 11.

⁷ Ibid., Boucher, MO-1175-8, 16, 17, 18, and 19.

⁸ Ibid., Boucher, Mo-1175-3, 16, 17, and 18.

⁹ Ibid., Boucher, MO-1175-1 and 2.

four to five feet high.¹⁰ Four trees (one small and sickly) occupy the area.¹¹ Alongside the house, a two-foot high evergreen grew beneath the west study window (Room 109). Three spirea, trimmed one-foot above the railing, graced the north side of the front porch. At the extreme northwest rounded corner, a smaller shrub grew, cut to just above the porch floor.¹²

Connecting these two diverse north lawn areas were two natural pathways. The footpaths (and their worn turf areas) were simply gaps in the line of vegetation which stretched from a point at the center of the kitchen wing northward to Truman Road. The natural openings allowed access for the yard men as well as the Secret Service agents to pass from one part of the lawn to the other.¹³

In the barn area, four-foot bushes graced the northeast corner while a lilac close to the northwest corner reached eight feet high. Along the barn's west wall, bushes at either end were about five feet high, but a shrub in the middle stretched to eight or nine feet in the air. The pedestrian gate opening, although partially blocked to the east, was accessible from the yard and the alley.¹⁴

In the absence of historical landscape documentation and direction, the National Park Service exercised caution during the 1983 growing season to ensure that the historic character of the Truman landscape was respected. Only basic maintenance was performed and most of the plantings were permitted to grow. Bob Lockwood continued his mowing services during this time.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid., Boucher, MO-1175-14 and 15.

¹¹ Ibid., Boucher, MO-1175-1.

¹² Ibid., Boucher, MO-1175-4 and 12.

¹³ Ibid., Boucher, MO-1175-1 and 4; and Tom Richter, Chief of Interpretation (formerly Ranger-In-Charge), Harry S Truman National Historical Site, conversation with author at 219 North Delaware Street, 28 October 1986, Independence, Missouri.

¹⁴ Ibid., Boucher, MO-1175-21 and 22.

¹⁵ Tom Richter, Chief of Interpretation (formerly Ranger-In-Charge), Harry S Truman National Historic Site, conversation with author at 219 North Delaware Street, 28 October 1986, Independence, Missouri.

Conditions in 1984

With the home's dedication scheduled for May 12, 1984, and its public opening only three days later, physical alterations to the property were performed in the early months of 1984. Midwest Regional Office personnel prepared contract documents to replace the cracked and broken sidewalks and to remove hazardous tree limbs.¹⁶

For visitor safety, sidewalks leading from North Delaware Street to the front entrance and the curving walkway around the south end of the house to the kitchen entrance were replaced in kind. Undertaken in late spring, the work resulted in slight ground disturbance through the use of a backhoe to remove the historic concrete. Two downspouts at the south elevation were extended through new drain pipe laid beneath the replaced sidewalk to provide better drainage away from the house's foundation. After laborers installed the new forms and poured the concrete, the surrounding lawn area was reseeded. While the historic sidewalk in the front yard was at grade, the new sidewalk stood one to two inches above grade. Placement of new sod in 1987 corrected this situation.

In February 1984, Orr Tree Service offered recommendations and an estimate for work to be performed on the trees. A windstorm in late February required additional work from Orr Tree Service to remove broken branches from the ground. A National Park Service Midwest Regional Office employee coordinated the project in March and April. A severe icestorm in March, however, resulted in a reassessment of the scope of work. Nearly all the trees suffered ice damage with branches down all over the yard. Shrubbery was also damaged, with branches bent low to the ground. In early April, the National Park Service supervised the removal of damaged branches, thinning of sucker branches, and removal of dead material on all the damaged trees. At the southeast, tree limbs overhanging the house were also trimmed back. Broken limb stubs were trimmed to the nearest principal branch. In addition to pruning the elms and silver maples, wound dressings were performed on cuts larger than two inches in diameter. Vines and tree sprouts were removed

¹⁶ Lee Jameson, Restoration Specialist, to Associate Regional Director, Planning and Resource Preservation, Midwest Region, trip report (for 16-20 January 1984); and Michael Lee, Restoration Specialist, to Associate Regional Director, Planning and Resource Preservation, Midwest Region, trip report (for 21-24 February 1984), H3015, file-Maintenance/Structure HSTR, park files, Independence, Missouri.

from the shrub beds. Dead, broken growth in shrubs was extracted as was poison ivy.¹⁷

In early March, the completion of the electrical rewiring of the home caused slight ground disturbance. Burial of a direct electrical cable from a new meter box near the study to a power pole on Truman Road resulted in trenching across the north lawn.¹⁸

Horticultural expert Harry Vieth of the University of Missouri's Department of Agronomy Extension Program performed a soil analysis in September 1984. The soil test report disclosed the levels of phosphorous, potassium, calcium, and magnesium present in the soil. Vieth offered suggestions for proper fertilization. He recommended using two pounds of nitrogen and a half pound of phosphates per 1,000 acres. For best results, half of the fertilizer should be applied in September and half in November using the slow release method. If the lawn was to be irrigated, Vieth recommended the use of one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in late April or early May using the fast release form. Vieth advised that testing should occur every two or three years to ensure proper fertilization.¹⁹ (See Appendix D).

Vieth also determined that the composition of the lawn was common Kentucky blue grass and clover.²⁰ During the 1984 growing season, Dan Cordes of Raytown, Missouri, accomplished the lawn mowing service.

In November 1984, Antioch Outdoor Maintenance won an eleven-month contract for lawn and snow removal. Terms of the contract

¹⁷ Orr's Tree Service to Administrative Officer Joan Sanders, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, letters, 28 February and 21 March 1984, park files; and Landscape Architect Joe Beer to Associate Regional Director, Planning and Resource Preservation, Midwest Region, trip reports (for 6-8 March and 8-13 April 1984), D34, Midwest Regional Office Files. The ice storm's devastation may be viewed in the park photographic file, role number 3, 20 March 1984.

¹⁸ Ibid., Jameson to Associate Regional Director, Planning and Resource Preservation, Midwest Region, trip report (for 6-11 March 1984), H3015, file-Maintenance/Structure HSTR, park files, Independence, Missouri.

¹⁹ Harry Vieth, Soil Test Report (Horticulture), Missouri Cooperative Extension Service, University of Missouri, Department of Agronomy Extension Program, for 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Missouri, 2 April 1984.

²⁰ Facility Manager Skip Brooks to Superintendent, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, 21 September 1984, D32, park files.

provided that the grass did not grow any higher than three and a half inches or be cut lower than one and a half inches. The contractor's responsibilities included trimming. Trimmed areas around trees, shrubs, fence, and walkways could not exceed one and a half times the length of the grass. After each mowing, all debris including organic material and litter had to be removed from the lawn and sidewalks.²¹

Antioch Outdoor Maintenance was also responsible for irrigating the grass, trees, shrubs, and flowers between 6:00 and 9:00 a.m. The National Park Service supplied the materials for fertilization and seeding to be done in late September either through verticut or aerator application. The shrubs and trees on the grounds were also tended by the contractor.²²

In the fall, the leaves are removed during the month of November at least once a week, through the use of a rake, leaf blower, or leaf vacuum. Snow removal occurred when there were two or more inches of accumulation. In case of ice, a fifty-fifty mixture of sand and calcium chloride was spread on the sidewalks, both inside and outside the fence, and on the steps and porches of the house.²³ In November 1984, Dan Cordes Lawn Mowing Service was awarded a six-month contract to plow snow off the driveway and adjacent alley of the national historic site.²⁴

Conditions in 1985, 1986, and 1987

With restoration of the Truman home underway in 1985, improvements and safety precautions caused disturbances to the grounds. On May 21, 1985, workers trenched for a galvanized water service line from the water meter to the northeast corner of the Truman home, approximately seventy-five feet. A six- to eight-inch wide and forty-two-inch deep trench accommodated the pipe. In July 1985, new electrical service was run to the barn/carriage house through underground conduit extending from beneath the kitchen porch to the west elevation of the barn. The frayed overhead lines were disconnected, but left in place.

²¹ Service Order for Antioch Outdoor Maintenance, Kansas City, Missouri (Order Number PX 6460-5-0014) to Harry S Truman National Historic Site, 30 October 1984, park files.

²² Ibid., Grounds Maintenance Specifications, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, undated (circa 1984).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Service Order for Dan Cordes Lawn Mower Service, Independence, Missouri (Order Number PX 6460-5-0013) to Harry S Truman National Historic Site, 30 October 1984, park files.

Stripping and painting the house necessitated some alterations to the dense vegetation which came in contact with the structure. One especially notable example involved the grapevine along the south facade of the screened back porch. Workers removed the prodigious vine from the structure to permit removal of the screens for repairs and painting. Without its structural support, the grapevine had to be radically cutback to ensure its survival. During 1986, the vines were allowed to grow freely in hopes that its former unrestrained growth would be reestablished.²⁵ During the 1987 season, the grapevine had largely regained its former glory.

In August 1985, lightning rods were installed to the top of the shingle oak to reduce the chance of the tree being damaged by lightning and thereby harming the house. The lightning rods extended down into a one-foot deep trench in the south yard which stretched twenty-five feet away from the trunk in order to avoid root damage.²⁶

Sometime during the 1984-85 period, at least three shrubs were removed from the landscape. Three small evergreen shrubs were removed by the National Park Service. The locations of the shrubs are as follows: beneath the south Gates bathroom window; adjacent to a large bush south of the sidewalk at the southeast corner of the rear porch; and between two large bushes at the south side of the intersection of the rear sidewalk and the driveway. No documentation exists to substantiate that the shrubs were planned landscape components.²⁷

By 1984, the small rose garden on the north side of the intersection of the rear sidewalk and the driveway was in poor condition. As early as 1980, some of the bushes began to die. By early 1985, only seven rose bushes were alive. Photographs taken during the 1960s and 1970s indicate the garden held as many as ten bushes following a four by three by four pattern on a north-south

²⁵ Tom Richter, Chief of Interpretation (formerly Ranger-In-Charge), Harry S Truman National Historic Site, conversation with author at 219 North Delaware Street, 28 October 1986, Independence, Missouri.

²⁶ Administrative Officer Joan Sanders, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, telephone conversation with Midwest Region Seasonal Historian Pamela Smoot, 18 December 1985. The Midwest Region prepared the construction contract.

²⁷ Conversation with Liz Safly, Librarian, Harry S. Truman Library, 29 October 1986, Independence, Missouri; inspection by authors of 219 North Delaware Street, 31 October 1986; and Appendix A, Figures 23, 29, 30, and 31.

axis. Bob Lockwood observed that Rev. Hobby tended to "bunch up" the plants--planting a new bush next to any dead rose plant.²⁸

The park received the services of an expert rosarian, Denfred O. "Dink" Watsky. A member of the American Rose Society and an accredited rose judge, Watsky participated in the Volunteers in Parks (VIP) program whereby he would care for the rose garden on a regular basis. In an attempt to recapture its original appearance, park personnel determined to replace the rose garden with bushes matching the existing "live" red and pink varieties. On March 15, 1985, the National Park Service dug up the rose garden and removed seven above-grade plants and the remains of five below-grade plants. Park Service workers marked the original placement of the rose bushes with wooden stakes and then photographed the disturbed bed. Unfortunately, no identification of the dislodged "live" rose varieties were made. Tulip bulbs were also removed from the bed. Park personnel instructed Watsky to conform to the extant rose color scheme--pink and red--which was verified by Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace.²⁹

On May 25, 1985, Watsky and park personnel planted the new rose bushes in the historic four by three by four pattern.³⁰ Aligned in rows, the bushes no longer conformed to the irregular pattern which evolved during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The planting of the new bed, going from south to north, is as follows: east row--Christian Dior (red), Perfume Delight (pink), Tropicana (orange), and Queen Elizabeth (red/pink); center row--Montezuma (orange) and Chicago Psalc (pink/orange); and west row--Oklahoma (red), Royal Highness (pink), Chrysler Imperial (red/pink), and Confidence (pink).³¹

²⁸ Robert "Bob" Lockwood, interview with Pamela Smoot at 219 North Delaware Street, 26 June 1985, Independence, Missouri.

²⁹ Tom Richter, Chief of Interpretation (formerly Ranger-In-Charge), conversation with author at 219 North Delaware Street, 28 October 1986, Independence, Missouri; Park Photographic File, placement of original rose bed, 28 March 1985, number 67:12, Office of the Superintendent; and "Dink Watsky File," Files of the Facility Management Specialist, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri.

³⁰ Facility Management Specialist Gregory "Skip" Brooks, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, telephone conversation with Pamela Smoot, 15 August 1985.

³¹ Sketch of newly-planted rose garden, 28 May 1985, "Dink Watsky File," Files of the Facility Management Specialist, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri. The sketch map includes color designations. These designations were determined by laymen (park staff) and should not be construed as

Leaf collars (a ring of roofing paper filled with leaves) and plastic cones cover the rose bushes during the winter and spring to prevent freeze and thaw damage to the plants. No historical evidence exists to support this practice. Also, the VIP utilizes a six-inch non-historic rain gauge in the rose garden in order to judge weekly watering practices.³²

Other alterations to the property undertaken in 1985 involved the installation of a central air-conditioning and security lighting system. A large air-conditioning unit was installed just west of the pergola and screened rear porch area along the north facade of the house. Park Service officials hoped the unit would be screened from view by the area's heavy vegetation. Removal of dead vegetation in 1986, however, resulted in the unit becoming a visual intrusion, particularly during winter when the vegetation does not screen it adequately. To improve nighttime security, a total of three floodlights mounted on steel posts were installed on the north, east, and south lawns. [A permanent, less intrusive lighting system was installed in the spring of 1988 and two additional lights were installed in the front, west yard.] Trenches to accommodate the electrical wiring caused additional ground disturbance. In late 1986, these trench "fill" areas had settled and the trenchlines were clearly visible on the lawn.³³

During the 1986 growing season, the lawn mowing contractor, Dan Cordes Lawn Mowing, cared for general landscape maintenance. Park Service guidelines authorized mowing grass exceeding three inches high with a gas-operated mower complete with a bag attachment. Other specialized services included leaf removal, bush and hedge care, flower bed maintenance (excluding the rose garden), fertilization and seeding, and storm damage clean-up. All debris (clippings, leaves, litter, tree limbs, etc.) had to be removed from the site. Flower beds were to be cleared of weeds and general debris. Shrubbery trimming was initiated whenever new growth exceeded six inches and guidelines directed that trimming followed existing shrubbery shapes. Planting beds beneath the shrubbery were to be raked regularly to prevent volunteer growth from hindering shrubbery development. Fertilization and seeding were

official terminology used by rosarians.

³² Tom Richter, Chief of Interpretation (formerly Ranger-In-Charge), Harry S Truman National Historic Site, conversation with author at 219 North Delaware Street, 28 October 1986; and inspection by authors of 219 North Delaware Street, 31 October 1986, Independence, Missouri.

³³ Inspection by authors of 219 North Delaware Street, 31 October 1986, Independence, Missouri.

performed in April and could be applied either through the verticut or aerator methods.³⁴

An inspection in late October 1986 revealed several observations relating to the landscape. In the west, front yard, the ground surrounding the trees featured circular trenches where the lawn mower wheels continuously ran and eradicated the turf.³⁵ Along Truman Road, shrubbery no longer extended past the steel picket fence in the northeast yard, but was cut back on the average of two feet from the fence. In the extreme northwest corner of the yard where there were two stumps of former elm trees, the stump to the south had rotted away leaving a one-foot hole. The tall vertical spirea bush just north of the front entrance was slightly trimmed back from the walkway and steps so it would not obscure the view from the porch to the street or hinder visitor traffic.

The line of spirea along the south alley fence, trimmed to slightly above fence-level, conformed to 1982 standards, although the pedestrian gate near the barn used to be more overgrown than the October 1986 inspection found. Volunteer plants and weeds had been removed. Fence posts along the alley had weathered out to reveal more of the concrete footings. Spirea around the Gates south porch appeared to be lower than it should be. Vegetation in the pergola area had been thinned out with some shrubs around the brick foundation removed.³⁶ Shrubby levels had also been lowered considerably in this general area. The result was the elimination of the natural screening present from the presidential period to the early 1980s. The shroud of privacy which obscured the back porch from the bustle of Truman Road was substantially diminished.³⁷

In November 1986, a contract to remove steel fence sections for restoration also contributed to temporary landscape changes. Soil had to be scraped away from beneath some fence sections. Vegetation particularly along the alley had to be trimmed away from

³⁴ Request for Quotations, Standard Form 18, Dan Cordes Lawn Mowing, Independence, Missouri, 19 September 1986; and Grounds Maintenance Specifications, "Lawn Contract File," circa 1986, Files of the Facility Management Specialist, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri.

³⁵ Inspection by authors of 219 North Delaware Street, 31 October 1986, Independence, Missouri.

³⁶ Tom Richter, Chief of Interpretation (formerly Ranger-In-Charge), Harry S Truman National Historic Site, conversation with author at 219 North Delaware Street, 28 October 1986, Independence, Missouri.

³⁷ Inspection by authors of 219 North Delaware Street, 31 October 1986, Independence, Missouri.

the fence. Some plants had grown into and around fence posts and sections. No plants were removed.³⁸

In the fall of 1987, the National Park Service removed a non-historic silver maple from the southeast yard near the alley fence. A volunteer which began growing in the late 1970s, the tree threatened to disrupt the overhead powerline which historically provided electricity to the carriage house. For this reason, the tree and stump were removed.³⁹

Planning from 1987 through 1989 included the completion of a cultural landscape report and landscape maintenance plan. The document, based on historical evidence, will allow the National Park Service to formulate and execute landscape actions to preserve and manage the historic scene of Harry and Bess Truman's 219 North Delaware Street.

³⁸ Mike Healy, Facility Management Specialist, conversation with author at 219 North Delaware Street, 31 October 1986, Independence, Missouri.

³⁹ Acting Regional Director Warren H. Hill to Superintendent Norman J. Reigle, 9 October 1987 (approval of XXX Form No. 6400-7-0017), file H4217, Division of Cultural Resources Management, Midwest Regional Office Files.

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